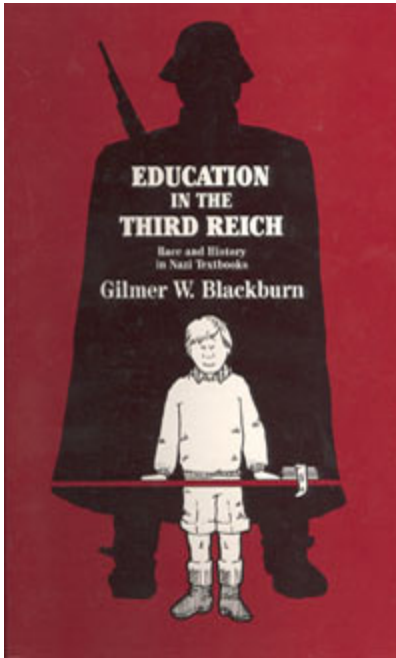




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Education in the Third Reich
A Study of Race and History in Nazi Textbooks

Gilmer W. Blackburn

State University of New York Press
ALBANY

For my mother, Hettie Callaway Blackburn

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Preface

The people who say that Hitler is Antichrist, or alternatively, the Holy Ghost, are nearer an understanding of the truth than the intellectuals who for ten dreadful years have kept it up that he is merely a figure out of comic opera, not worth taking seriously.

George Orwell, 1941, *THE COLLECTED ESSAYS, II*

Adolf Hitler's seizure of power on January 30, 1933, brought Germany both to a turning point in history and to a radical departure from traditional educational practice. Determined from the beginning to take absolute control of the nation, the Nazi Fuehrer reserved for the schools the important task of refashioning the German psyche. The difficulties he encountered in altering an educational system that was second to none in Europe and was reinforced by a strong tradition of academic integrity should not be minimized. Hitler's success in this ambitious endeavor was short-lived but impressive, especially considering that his motives were political rather than academic.

The most frightening aspect of Nazi educational policy was the regime's success in implementing ideas that had crystallized years earlier in Hitler's mind and had been widely disseminated through his writings and public speeches. 1 Perhaps no modern chief of state had come to power after writing such starkly revealing memoirs.

Viewed superficially, National Socialist educational ideas appear simple, direct, and shallow. Yet deeper soundings into the uncharted depths of Nazi cognition reveal ominous sources, whose

impact was more far-reaching than many scholars have been willing to admit. The short duration of Hitler's Reich allowed Western academicians to ignore or deny the ultimate significance of an educational experiment designed and implemented with breathtaking clarity. A philosophy based upon sentiment is admittedly more difficult to assess

than one with rational supports, especially when the throbbing passions that gave it birth and sustenance have cooled. The institutionalization of the Fuehrer's personal hatreds transformed German schools into demolition agencies charged with extirpating the influence of the various enemies of National Socialism. As a final educational goal, Hitler aimed at nothing short of rolling back the tide of twentieth-century development and abandoning the anthropological unity of the human race. 2

The emphatic youth orientation of National Socialism increased its educational appeal. The Nazis' often-cited adolescent mentality derived both from calculation and from the philosophical interests of the movement's leaders, who insisted that the future belonged to the youth. The ingathering of German youth was a foremost canon of Nazi educational doctrine.³ Even the party's propaganda exploited the generational conflict, portraying the movement's directors as young, vibrant, and charged with excitement, in contrast to the old, tired democratic leaders. "Make room, you old ones" was a favorite slogan directed against the leadership of the Weimar Republic.⁴ After 1933, many of Hitler's personnel changes reflected a preference for the vigor and the lack of restraint of youth. The pseudomilitary pageantry of Hitler's party also appealed to adolescents, as well as to the *Sturm und Drang* tradition of German romanticism.

The Nazi schools fostered a purposefully one-sided political orientation in order to prepare individuals to act in mass to secure the future of the Aryan race. Baldur von Schirach, the Fuehrer of the *Hitlerjugend*, stated in a speech at the National Theater in Weimar: "The youth leader and educator of the future will be a

priest of the National Socialist creed and an officer in the National Socialist service." Perhaps the rapier mind of Joseph Goebbels most succinctly identified the function of education in the Nazi state. The propaganda minister compared the educational process to a "kneading machine," which processed raw human material into a "coherent mass" capable of being "utilized and manipulated for the political aims of the state."⁵

The National Socialist educational philosophy assumed, above all, the malleability of human personality and the capacity of a modern totalitarian state to shape in a predetermined form the youth entrusted to its schools. The sheer magnitude of the Nazi educational enterprise elevates its importance for scholarly research. The Nazi success in galvanizing overwhelming national sentiment for the regime's short-term goals appears beyond refutation. German youth, for the most part, proved receptive to simplified heroic legends and to black-and-white comparisons, and German teachers succumbed just as meekly to Nazi *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination.⁶

Despite the success of Hitler's program, however, the National Socialist philosophy generated considerable inner tensions. Existing studies fail to take into sufficient account the contradictions, such as that between determinism and voluntarism, which permeated the educational outlook of the Nazi textbooks. It is my contention that the resolution of such conflicts in favor of the voluntaristic, or even metaphysical, elements accounts for the urgent tempo, the activism, and the dynamism that characterized the Nazis' historical writings (and by implication the movement's political actions as well). The Nazi history textbook mirrored the contradictions and tensions of Hitler's own personality: outward strength and inner weakness. Analyses similar to the one undertaken here have attempted to explain the tensions within Karl Marx's philosophy of dialectical materialism, ⁷ but the refusal of scholars to take the ideational framework of National Socialism seriously has hampered our understanding of that period.

The primary source materials for this study consisted of a broad, representative collection of approximately three dozen history textbooks, primers, and books of readings containing historical materials employed in the German *Volksschulen* at every level of instruction. In addition, collections of speeches and writings by National Socialist political leaders and theoretical works by educational officials of the Third Reich were analyzed.

To avoid unwieldiness, an investigation of so large a potential scope requires a clear definition of procedure. It is perhaps appropriate first to describe the questions this study *did not* propose to address: (1) the historical accuracy of Nazi writings, except as they related to educational philosophy; (2) the comparison of

historical materials included in Nazi textbooks with those of previous German (or non-German) regimes; and (3) the teaching methods employed or the manner in which the materials were presented in class. Instead, I undertook a thematic analysis of the content of the Nazi history textbooks. Aristotle observed centuries ago that if we desire to understand a people we must first examine the education they provide for their children. This study thus assumed that a totalitarian regime would effect a close integration of educational philosophy and societal goals and that the reading materials prescribed for use in the schools would reflect the Nazi view of life in a relatively uncomplicated form.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of all who helped make this work possible, realizing that such efforts are futile in light of the almost endless chain of involvement that a book such as this requires. The assistance of the School of Education at the University of North Carolina, and in particular the insightful guidance of S. M.

Holton, are gratefully acknowledged. A. H. Price and the Central European Division of the Library of Congress offered invaluable aid, as did a host of my colleagues and friends. G. H. Allen, William Stowe, Dan Proctor, and the Reverend T. Max Linnens read portions of the manuscript and provided helpful advice. Kathryn Hamrick's literary skills and resourcefulness were consistently evident in her excellent critique of the manuscript. These and other critics helped me avoid many pitfalls. Any remaining deficiencies are mine alone. A successful author is frequently dependent upon a typist who has the ability both to decipher his scribble and to fathom his thought processes. Vicki Spangler Walker brought to this task a dedication to perfection that was of inestimable value to me. Gardner-Webb College provided financial assistance and administrative support. I must also beg the indulgence of my wife, Martha, and my children, Julie and Stuart, who suffered an inordinate degree of neglect for the duration of this project.

Chapter One

National Socialism and the Modern Malaise

You can take away a man's gods, but only to give him others in return.

Carl G. Jung, *THE UNDISCOVERED SELF*

Take away from present-day mankind its education-based, religious-dogmatic principles or, practically speaking, ethical-moral principles by abolishing this religious education, but without replacing it by an equivalent, and the result will be a grave shock to the foundations of their existence.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The twentieth century found the well of evil much deeper than the eighteenth century ever imagined it to be. ¹ Demons presumably banished two centuries earlier by the stewards of the Enlightenment returned to torment the world in the garb of the khaki-clad Nazi storm troopers. Acting upon the authority of a self-proclaimed mandate, the Nazis let loose a political plague across Europe, destroying Jews, gypsies, and other "defectives" who were thought to contaminate the purity of the Aryan race. Inferior races of mankind were treated as nothing more than protoplasm to be recycled without regard for the intrinsic worth their members possessed as human beings. The chief apostle of the religion whose god was the racial superman plunged the world into the fiery furnace of global conflict, determined to recast the molten human mass in his own idolatrous image. The initial Western response to the Nazi threat was despair, a condition Gabriel Marcel labeled a "dissolution at the heart of things . . . complete insolvency."²

The Demise of the Autonomous Individual

The Enlightenment inspired modern man's peculiar version of the sin of hubris: namely, his setting himself up as a separate,

inviolable entity, answerable to himself alone, fully sovereign and rival to Goda god in his own right. By the twentieth century, even the absence of belief attained the status of a recognized dogma. Equally debilitating was the new cult of spontaneity, spawned by Freudian psychology, which relinquishedat least in the popular mindcontrols over human drives, urges, wishes, and whims. The privatization of religious practice also rendered the spiritual dimension a negligible factor in corporate life. And modern capitalism, by stimulating ferocious appetites for the products of modern industry, accelerated the breakdown of traditional values. At its best, capitalism delivered man from the clutches of poverty, but at its worst, it promoted self-indulgence and social decadence.

By the turn of the present century, the nihilistic forces contending for control of modern man's disheveled soul had produced a deafening, soul-searing, intellectual pandemonium. As the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya prophesied generations earlier: "The sleep of reason begets monsters." 3 The weakened character of modern man was the result of his refusal to draw limits around himself. Even Friedrich Nietzsche, who helped create the problem, admitted as much. All manner of perversions competed to fill the void once occupied by religious faith. Modern man's grotesquely fragmented image began to resemble the contorted features on a Picasso canvas. With its citizenry in disarray, the democratic societies were paralyzed, unable to protect themselves from the threats of dictatorship.

Moral absolutism was no longer intellectually defensible, but the disintegration of traditional moral and social restraints resulted in a new form of tyranny: man victimized by group pressures and

norms. The redefinition of good and evil in social terms meant a relocation of the historic source of moral and spiritual valuation. Traditionally, Western life was held in balance, as it were, by opposing magnetic fields perceived good and evil but the relaxation of the tension between these antagonistic forces disoriented man's moral compass, allowing the needle to fluctuate erratically, pausing only long enough to point to transitory goals. Wandering from one place to another, modern man thus could not chart a fixed course based upon recognized points of reference. The atmosphere of confusion was perhaps most exaggerated in Germany, where the resurgent powers of barbarism overwhelmed democracy and swept away the weak foundations of Weimar society.

Carl Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst and errant disciple of Freud, gauged the consequences to the human psyche of lost belief: "It is quite natural that with the triumph of the Goddess of Reason a general neuroticizing of modern man should set in, a dissociation of personality analogous to the splitting of the world today by the Iron

Curtain. This boundary line bristling with barbed wire runs through the psyche of modern man." 4

The decline of democratic forces both inside and outside of Germany was more moral than material. Joseph Goebbels's speech in October 4, 1933 to a group of journalists indicated that he was well aware of the weakness of will among the democratic forces: "No one can assert that this government [the Third Reich] is comprised of stupid persons. For had they been more stupid than their opponents, then their opponents, by virtue of their greater intelligence, would have probably found ways and means of keeping us out of power." 5

While the democratic mind languished, the dictatorships erected artificial dikes of ideology to provide teleological content for the lives of their people. The omnipotent state also performed a second, equally crucial task for its citizens: it forced their attention away from an impoverished inner life and locked their gaze upon an artificially stimulated public life. 6 This totalitarian statism was inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the eccentric philosopher of the French Enlightenment, whose later works were anathema to supporters of individual autonomy. In his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, Rousseau argued that the individual, by himself and without a fatherland, counted for nothing. By opting for artificial strictures to mold personality, the author of *Emile* and the advocate of naturalism had negotiated an almost unimaginable *volte-face*: "It is education that must give the souls of the people a national form and so shape their opinions and their tastes that they become patriots as much . . . [by] inclination and passion as by necessity." This education was to be collective, never individual. In

fact, Rousseau insisted that children be denied the opportunity for solitary play and exposure to foreign instructors.⁷

As the creature of an official ideology, the individual citizen in the totalitarian state was stripped of his dependence upon "anything beside the state." By striving to swallow up the totality of the individual's existence, the dictator states, according to Carl Jung, became "religions and . . . a form of worship." Thus the religious function of man was "sucked into the maelstrom" of the totalitarian apparatus, which used it to support an "evilily distorted . . . deification of the state and the dictator."⁸

Despite the solemn claim that the twentieth century was to be the age of the common man, it instead victimized the individual by the very technological devices designed to make life a paradise on earth. Man's powerlessness was accentuated by his architectural creations, especially in the fascist states. Had Albert Speer's grandiose building program been completed, the monuments to Hitler's Third

Reich would have exceeded even the Egyptian pyramids in sheer enormity, dwarfing their creators. Speer himself admitted that within his proposed dome in Berlin "the man who is most important, the person for whom it is really done, shrinks to nothing. . . . I tried to solve the problem but I couldn't." 9

That the most creative mind within the Nazi inner circle could not break such an impasse is highly symbolic. To effect an architectural style that enhanced the authority of the state, Speer knew that absolute regularity was required, the same regularity displayed by jackboots rhythmically pounding upon pavement. But the price of such regularity was the abolition of the individual at least, the hollowing out of his interior. It was Speer's intention that the individual within these architectural structures not "feel anything." Recalling Goethe's reaction when he first gazed upon the amphitheater in Verona, Speer remarked: "If people with different minds are all pressed together in such a place, they will be unified in one mind. That was the aim of the stadium; it had nothing to do with what the small man might think personally." The negation of the individual was accentuated by the size of the architectural creations. The Nuremberg Stadium, built in the same horseshoe design as the Verona amphitheater, was to seat 450,000, while the reviewing stand at Zeppelin Field was to be twice the length of the Baths of Caracalla. In a poignant observation, Robert Hughes suggested that the reviewing stand "would be the stone witness to the beginning of the Third Reich and the end of history."¹⁰ Hughes's architectural insights concur with Jung's psychological perceptions: "The mass crushes out the insight and reflection that are still possible with the individual."¹¹

The traditions of the pre- and post-Enlightenment periods were held together by a golden thread of continuitythe belief in man's rationality. Although the rationalists had withstood the assaults of those who continued to insist upon man's brokenness and essential corruptionoriginal sinthey staggered before the onslaught against man's transcendental worth inspired by Karl Marx and Charles Darwin during the second half of the nineteenth century. The devotees of reason, having begun as self-intoxicated liberators freeing man from absurd old prejudices and aristocratic excesses, took no measures to protect their flanks from counterattacks by forces from the dark and diabolical elements in man's nature. Twentieth-century man was scarcely able to protect himself from the rain of blows which reduced him to the level of a mechanism: racialism, Freudianism, existentialism, and behaviorism. Carl Jung pronounced the condition a "psychic epidemic" and a "collective possession."¹²

The counterattack of the irrational was as relentless as it was indiscriminate: trails of blood and mass graves were strewn across

an entire age. Death cast its shadow across the twentieth century, claiming, according to one sophisticated estimate, the lives of more than one hundred million individuals, victims of deliberate acts of inhumanity. 13 In spite of his most fervently held convictions, twentieth-century man found it impossible to banish evil from the world. Daniel Bell, a modern social scientist, hypothesizes that the door to the irrational was left open by the "decline of religious faith in the last century," a condition he claims best characterizes the "moral temper of our time."14

Unlike the seventeenth-century savant, Blaise Pascal, who detected the fatal flaw at the inception of the modern age, most Western thinkers continued their singular reliance upon human reason, frantically attempting to make contact with something stable and unchanging. They projected themselves ever outward, further and further from the vortex of their being, and when they could locate no mooring place for their battered psyches, they were driven to repeat the effort endlessly. Franz Kafka revealed the tragic dilemma of modern man when he acknowledged that his own failures stemmed not from "laziness, weak-will or clumsiness" but from "the lack of ground under my feet . . . the lack of law."15 Men of learning reacted very unpredictably to such instability. From some of Europe's most hallowed halls of learning, men emerged (Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, Moeller van den Bruck) disseminating ideas which, in a short time, would be distorted and attached to an engine of power. The "terrible simplifiers" predicted by Jakob Burckhardt were ready to take charge of the twentieth century.

The Nazi Fuehrer was, in fact, the epitome of the hollowed-out,

modern nomad. Ironically, Hitler established his own personal identity in the atmosphere of the urban jungles, which his own supporters condemned as life-arresting.

Albert Speer, Hitler's most perceptive confidant and his alter ego for a considerable time, offers ample testimony that, despite the impression of confidence that he projected, his mentor was a man devoid of inner strength. Speer came to believe that there was "something insubstantial about him. . . . He simply could not let anyone approach his inner being because that core was lifeless, empty."¹⁶

The primordial core of a stable personality has no empty space. Only flimsy structures, positioned on the fringes of a psyche whose center is hollow, can collapse into a vacuum. One who attempts to build an ideology upon the illusory outer shell of being must live in constant fear, not knowing when his system of belief will disappear into a void. This was precisely Hitler's predicament and the source of the spasmodic character of the Nazi ideology. In the absence of

either a stable nucleus or a rich inner life, Hitler in the end could not avoid being crushed by the outer world. In his case, the inner void apparently increased over time disintegrating more and more areas of his life. Observing the "empty, burned out, lifeless" shell of a man cower in his Berlin bunker during the last days, Speer wondered "what had become of the formerly fearless corporal of the First World War?" 17

In order to conceal his own weakness, Hitler was forced to act out greatness. And he became a consummate actor. The public Hitler was a man of unalterable convictions. Before meeting a stranger, he frequently rehearsed the role he would play to impress that person. In the following conversation, for example, Deputy-Fuehrer Rudolf Hess prepared Hitler for one such audience:

Hitler: What does he expect?

Hess: Authority, of course. You can speak at length. Your will is unshakable. You give laws to the age.

Hitler: Then I'll speak with a firm voice. 18

A liar can never act on the basis of courage, only bluff. Knowing that his success depends upon his ability to deceive, the liar coward must substitute audacity for fortitude and hope that no one will seriously challenge his untenable position. Nevertheless, in his more lucid moments, a liar recognizes his true condition: weakness masquerading as strength. Thus it was with Hitler, whose cowardice was exceeded only by his willingness to gamble with his nation's future. The German Fuehrer's remarkable success as a political leader was the result of his ability to convince others Germans and non-Germans alike that his convictions were genuine and that he could fashion the world to reflect his ideas. He

converted others, but he almost certainly remained an unbeliever in the depths of his own heart. No one has adequately explained how a man of such insecurity and personal weakness could generate national confidence with such terrifying results.¹⁹

Hitler lied both to himself and to others. Albert Speer inadvertently discovered that Hitler knew that the war was lost even when enemy soldiers were far from the borders of the German Reich. Yet the Nazi warlord concealed this knowledge from the German people; and, even to his closest associates, he vehemently insisted that Germany would snatch victory from defeat. When the war turned against him, Hitler was trapped. He could either commit suicide immediately or persist in the lie of his belief in final victory, thus prolonging his own miserable existence for a while longer. By clinging to his own life, Hitler gave us our greatest insight into his character: we see his utter contempt for the world, even for the German people

whom he had so outrageously flattered, and his willingness to drag Germany and the greater part of Europe into the grave with him. In making himself believe in an unattainable victory, Hitler was hurling an anchor into empty space. There was in fact nothing within himself, as Marcel said, that could "withstand that process of dissolution at the heart of things." 20

Dr. Joseph Goebbels's propaganda ministry labored for years to perfect the "Big Lie" of National Socialism and to establish its credibility for Germany and the world. Goebbels succeeded brilliantly for a time, presenting the deceptively beautiful side of Nazism to the world: the spirited youth camps, the lusty singing, the swimming pools and athletic fields, the anticrime campaigns, the magnificent public buildings, and the superhighways. But the invading Allied armies in 1945 exposed that awful, ugly underside that the German government had carefully hidden from public view. The stench of corpses in the mass graves and the ovens of the SS have never completely left the world but hover like a contaminated cloud, ever threatening us with the memory of what man is capable of doing to his fellow creatures.

Goebbels's final communication to the German people from the Berlin bunker on May 1, 1945, stands as a tragic memorial to the hollowness of manufactured heroism: "Our Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, fighting to the last breath against Bolshevism, fell for Germany this afternoon."21

When the emperor finally appeared without his clothes, the world saw him for what he really was: sordid and despicable. Until that denouement Hitler's career appeared as high drama to millions in the Germanic world. Few mortals had climbed so high on the

ladder of worldly success. The tangible triumphs of the man were truly phenomenal. From a penniless and uneducated vagabond on the back streets of Vienna and an unknown soldier in the Great War, Hitler rose to heights of power rarely known in the history of the world. He restored the spirits of a defeated people and invigorated the economy of his nation. Then he slipped and fell, in like manner, to greater depths than perhaps any previous mortal. Hitler was fond of reminding his countrymen that Providence protected him, as a world-historical individual, from the harm of would-be assassins. Whether he was preserved by a Providential edict or by some quirk of fate, Hitler was to experience defeat while in command of his sensual faculties. Every hurt was to be felt by him with all of the passion of his impetuous nature. He was not spared in the wreckage as the Third Reich collapsed around him.

Adolf Hitler assured the German people that their leader followed the dictates of Providence with the "assurance of a sleepwalker."

But the Providential voices that guided his career appeared more frequently to have been echoes from deep within the seething pit of his own hatreds and lust for power. Benjamin Disraeli's remark about Napoleon applies equally to Hitler: he was a self-made man who worshiped his creator. 22 Nevertheless, he was permitted to see the very pinnacle of world power and to rest his cruel jackboot on the bleeding neck of Europe, all because he obeyed with singleminded devotion the voices that implored him to worship the god created in his own warped image.

The Secular State and the Search for Meaning

Ernest Becker, drawing heavily upon the seminal work of Wilhelm Reich and others, analyzes the relationship between Hitler's mental state and the psychic condition of the German populace. Chiding modern social scientists to "catch up with Hitler as a psychologist," Becker attributes the German Fuehrer's success to his understanding "that men will do anything for heroic belonging to a victorious cause if they are persuaded of the legitimacy of that cause." Hitler possessed the keen psychological insight necessary to exploit the craving for cosmic heroism among millions of Germans who suffered from the century's characteristic "sickness unto death."²³

Political leaders, whom Wilhelm Reich labels "political plaguemonsters," usurped a religious function in their role as high priests of their particular cause. They identified evil for their followers and promised to engineer a new world populated by superior creatures. The German "superman" becomes then the classic example of man attempting to jump over his own shadowstriving to dissociate himself from his animal origin. Reich

considers such an effort a recipe for disaster: "Once you base your whole life-striving on a desperate lie and try to implement that lie, try to make the world just the opposite of what it is, then you instrument your own undoing."²⁴

Twentieth-century practitioners of the "Big Lie" strutted their brief time on the stage of world events, claiming that their particular group was pure and good and thus eligible for eternal meaning. Other groups such as Jews and gypsies were identified as "animals . . . contaminating your purity and bringing disease and weakness into your vitality." Totalitarian leaders focused their people's attention upon "everything dark, inferior, and culpable in others." *Mein Kampf* contains some frightening pages whose words were ominously prophetic but went unheeded by Western leaders. In one reference Hitler describes how "With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles

with his blood, thus stealing her from her people." 25

Hitler's malady was religio-psychological, his obsession with bodily hygiene and his morbid fear of infectious disease masking something far deeper than a mere personality disorder. From what Viktor Frankl labeled an "existential vacuum," Hitler deduced apocalyptic meanings for the whole of history.²⁶ Discussing World War II, for example, he stated, "I am totally convinced that this struggle does not differ one hair's breadth from the battle which *I once fought out within myself*."²⁷ Concerning anti-Semitism, he said, "I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jews, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."²⁸ Hitler's most outrageous travesty was attempting to convert traditional Western metaphysical longings into raw energy to fuel his ambition for power. Hitler's fanatical followers wound through the twisting streets of the German Reich in the configuration of a monstrous reptile, threatening permanently to destroy Western values.

Sensing their pitiful finitude, the hollow, soulless citizens of the totalitarian states followed leaders who promised "rewards not only to their stomachs but to their souls." Such leaders provided little men a method of expiating their own private guilt by cleansing the earth of tainted ones. The leader of a thoroughgoing secular society, according to Becker, "must provide for some form of sacred absolution, regardless of the particular historical disguise that this absolution may wear." For Hitler, as well as for Stalin and Mussolini, the vehicle of this absolution was the Armageddon of armed conflict in which the enemy played a ritual role. Becker wrote: "Men try to qualify for eternalization by being clean and by

cleansing the world around them of the evil, the dirty; in this way they show that they are on the side of purity."29

Because "victimage is a universal need," those who preside over these cleansing rituals always label their victims as "dirt." When the dirty conduct a world conspiracy to defile the clean, their opponents can make a mass appeal for cosmic heroism to stamp them out. Peter Loewenberg wrote: "The nation-state at war sanctions the gratification of primitive antisocial impulses . . . especially acts of aggression, destruction, and violence, which civil society sternly punishes in peacetime."30

Auschwitz and Buchenwald became scenes in a ghastly "religious horror drama" staged by the Nazis as a "massive mystification rite." Secular society confronts modern man with a perplexing dilemma: no secular solution exists for the "primal mystery of life and death." Furthermore, attempts to satisfy the craving for redemption by turning the earth into a paradise serve only to stimulate man's most demonic qualities. Unable to "guarantee the absolute meaning of his life,"

wrote Becker, secular man attempts to "make closure on his cosmic heroism in *this life and this world*." 31

Closure for the Nazis included the creation and support of the racial myth and the attempt to establish a rootedness based upon the mystical link between *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil). Alfred Rosenberg, the foremost philosopher of National Socialism, wrote: "The God we honor would not exist if our soul and our blood did not exist."³² Perhaps Rosenberg would alter Descartes' famous adage to read, "I bleed therefore I am."

The fervent desire for something more, after the basic human needs were met, accentuated the "sense of boredom, ennui, emptiness, and meaninglessness" felt by those wandering aimlessly in the existential vacuum.³³ National Socialism attempted to fill that empty space to provide that something more. In his book *Der Braune Kult*, Hans-Jochen Gamm points out Hitler's keen appreciation for the importance of shrouding his regime's actions in ceremony and ritual as a way of filling the vacuum left by the demise of the church. In *Limits of Reason*, Modris Eksteins even argues that the Nazi Revolution was no "seizure of power" but rather an "assertion of positive wishes, of principles, of 'truths' in a vacuum of values, convictions, and political alternatives."³⁴

The creation of the cult of the Nazi SS elite was a result of Hitler's effort to "minister" to the psychic ills of his more fanatical followers. Unable to face the postwar world without direction, Heinrich Himmler and his wayward brawlers, "searching desperately for some truth," followed a leader who "would make everything come out right."³⁵ National Socialism had an appeal for such men which Marxist socialism could not match; it offered a

total view of life without destroying the traditional class structure. Peter Loewenberg suggested that the great influx of youth into the National Socialist party between 1928 and 1933 was directly related to the "developmental deprivation this cohort of German children suffered in terms of prolonged hunger, absence of parents, loss of the war, revolution, occupation, and inflation."³⁶

In their preference for neoromanticism, the Nazis retained a vital link with the past which ardent German nationalists could applaud. But neoromanticism linked the Nazis with more than an exclusively German past. The romantic celebration of great men had been inaugurated by the legendary career of Napoleon Bonaparte, the modern prototype of the sociopathic personality in politics. Correlli Barnett, a biographer of the Corsican, calls him "perhaps the earliest example of that phenomenon of the emerging mass society, the superstar." Yet he anticipated the rootlessness of contemporary society. "Napoleon was a bundle of different postures without a core," and

perhaps for that reason he felt compelled to initiate a new state industrythe manufacture of ersatz religions. As a mathematician and engineer, Napoleon conceived of society as a machine directed by a single will. "There must be no opposition," he said. This practitioner of modern power politics anticipated totalitarianism. "What is government? Nothing if it does not have public opinion on its side. How can it hope to counterbalance the influence of a tribune if it is always under attack." 37 In this sense, Napoleon Bonaparte, rather than the cautious, tradition-bound rulers of the House of Hohenzollern, could more properly be called the spiritual ancestor of Hitler. It must be conceded, however, that the Nazi Fuehrer pursued his vocation as "national savior" with more vehemence than did the French emperor. In 1932 Hitler stated: "That is the miracle of our time, that you have found methat among so many millions you have found me! and that I have found you! That is Germany's fortune."38

Hitler's belief in himself as the deliverer of his people began to take shape during his youth. According to Hitler's friend, August Kubizek, the seventeen-year-old underwent a peculiar transformation after experiencing one particular performance of Wagner's *Rienzi*, an opera whose central figure was a messianic leader betrayed by the people whose liberty he struggled to preserve. After the performance Hitler addressed Kubizek in a state of Promethean excitement. Kubizek recalled: "It was as if another being spoke out of his body. . . . It wasn't at all a case of a speaker being carried away by his own words. On the contrary, I rather felt as though he himself listened with astonishment and emotion to what burst from him with elementary force. . . . it was a state of complete ecstasy and rapture."39

From that date, Hitler saw himself as the messiah of his people, a world-historical individual entrusted with a mission, the details of which were revealed to him years later during his convalescence at the military hospital in Pasewalk in Pomerania. When Hitler "knew who he was," as Robert G. L. Waite has observed, he was as much a creature of his "voices" as was Joan, the maid of Orleans, who rallied her people against an oppressor half a millennium earlier. To halt Germany's oppressionindeed her violationby the Jews required a drastic step: Hitler "resolved to become a politician."⁴⁰

A careful reading of Hitler's utterances reveals a flagrant blaspheming of the spiritual tradition that he pretended to emulate. For example, in 1937, Hitler stated: "God has created this people and it has grown according to his will. And according to *our will* . . . it shall remain and never shall it pass away." During his first year in power, Hitler promised a "new kingdom on earth," one with "the

power and the glory, Amen." Should he fail, he invited his followers to "crucify me." The Fuehrer's continuous "God talk" deceived many Germans, who failed to understand the theological nature of his claims: namely, that Deity was lodged in the German people, who were to be the executors of their own miracles.

"Through us and in us the nation has risen again," he brazenly assured his listeners. 41 Some apparently understood. Hans Schemm, the Bavarian minister of education, wrote: "In fulfilling the will of the people, the Fuehrer fulfills the will of God; for the voice of the folk is the voice of God."42

The attainment of power was certainly not viewed by the Nazis as the sole objective of their struggle, but in the opinion of Bernhard Rust, Hitler's minister of education, "*the beginning of a process of transformation whereby the total life of the people was to be refashioned in harmony with the philosophy of National Socialism.*"43 A Nazi history textbook stated: "Germany at the time [1933] had no belief and no *Weltanschauung* . . . no great unifying idea." And furthermore: "A majority of the German people no longer believed in ideas. They believed in needs, in success, in profit."44

The new German schools were to help create a militarized society that would both purge the national spirit of foreign impurities and promote a high-tension ethos that accepted war as a normal condition in a life of struggle. To instill in the youth a proper appreciation of this mission, an appropriate ideology was required: a Germanic ideology.

Chapter Two

National Socialism as a Metaphysical System

The folkish state will have to make certain that by a suitable education of youth it will some day obtain a race ripe for the last and greatest decision on this earth. . . . The crown of the folkish state's entire work of education and training must be to burn the racial sense and racial feeling into the instinct and the intellect, the heart and the brain of the youth entrusted to it. No boy and no girl must leave school without having been led to an ultimate realization of the necessity and essence of blood purity.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The National Socialists insisted that Germany constituted an indigenous culture and that because Germans had remained closer to their primitive origins than had other peoples, they imbibed knowledge differently than peoples less racially pure. A peculiar anxiety for the fate of the pure German *Volksgenossen* produced in the philosophy of National Socialism several traits usually associated with metaphysical systems: (1) *the telic character*, the future orientation of the movement; (2) belief in *the sacred meaning of history*, the desire to preserve the species; and (3) *the chiliastic claim*, a radical rejection of existing society and a vision of a new "Thousand-Year Reich." All of these traits were bound together by the secular religious character of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and by Hitler's charismatic leadership.

The Nazis insisted that their ideological foes, the Marxists, had set their own people adrift in confusion by abandoning the idea of a supreme being. Hitler preferred even a bankrupt belief to no belief

at all. Indeed, Friedrich Meinecke insists that National Socialism was composed of persons with "suppressed metaphysical desires," who conceived the world as a battleground between spiritual principles. ¹ Hans Staudinger wrote in his analysis of *Mein Kampf*: "For Hitler the transcendent terms *creator*, *eternal will*, and *nature* were meta-

physical entities by which universe, nature, and culture are determined." However crude and distasteful the Nazi ideology appeared to its foes, it contained a breathtaking inner consistency. 2

World domination by a superior species was implicit in the logic of National Socialism, but the active intervention of man was indispensable to ensure the proper outcome of the historical process. Otherwise, a reversal of the evolutionary process was likely, and the possibility that such a reversal would lead to the degeneration of the superior race caused such trepidation among the Nazis that they were willing to justify the most drastic measures even physical extermination to remove the threat. Thus the Nazis viewed education not only as an extension of their national will to power but also as a means of accelerating progress toward the regime's political goals.

The tension within the National Socialist philosophy between the *determinism* of the blood and the *voluntarism* of the will accounted for the most distinctive features of Nazi history: the urgent tempo, the political activism, and the pathos of the historical writing.

The Historical Roots of the "Germanic Ideology"

[the Germans] a people so wise, so reasonable, so tolerant . . .
Napoleon Bonaparte, 1812

To be a people, to have a feeling for a cause, that is the religion of our time: through this faith must you be harmonious and strong, through this overcome the devil and hell. That is the highest religion, to have love for the fatherland as gentlemen and princes, as fathers and mothers, as wives and children; that is the highest religion, to bequeath to your descendants a good name, a free land, a proud disposition; that is the highest religion, to stand the test with one's truest blood, purchased by

the truest, freest blood of the father.

Ernst Moritz Arndt, *GEIST DER ZEIT*

No exact prototype of National Socialism existed among nineteenth-century philosophies, although a multitude of ideas from that era found their way into Hitler's Germanic ideology. Although much of Hitler's success resulted from his shrewd exploitation of frustrations growing out of the twentieth-century European milieu, several generations of German thinkers helped prepare a fertile soil to receive the seeds of Nazism. Their ideas deserve careful scrutiny in accounting for the success of Hitler's movement.

The National Socialist ideology borrowed heavily from two contradictory and therefore incompatible nineteenth-century sources: romantic nationalism and social Darwinism. The former was conservative, cyclical, and historically conditioned; the latter nihilistic,

indeterminate, and materialistic. The tension within the Nazi ideology resulted from the clash between the *sturm und drang* romanticism of early nineteenth-century Germany, which exalted the instinctive goodness of primitive German society, and the chaotic, tooth-and-claw barbarity of social Darwinism, the roots of which were universal and prevalent in European thought in the years after 1859.

Germans of many philosophical orientations have accepted the cyclical or organic interpretation of history. Johann Herder (1744-1803) was one of the first important philosophers to describe human life as the organic, plantlike unfolding of a "folk-soul," and even though he encouraged national unity based upon an indigenous German culture, most scholars profoundly doubt that Herder would have accepted Nordic racial supremacy.

A fellow German, Johann Fichte (1762-1814), first advocated the surrender of individual interests in favor of those of the nation, which he insisted should spurn the "easy spirit of civic love of constitution and laws" in favor of "the burning flame of Fatherland love" and "joyful sacrifice." Fichte yearned to recapture the Edenlike simplicity of the early Germans, whom he called the *Urvolk*: "In the beginning the *Urvolk*, the original people, lived in a paradise of innocence, a paradise without knowledge, labor or art." Man's original nature represented for Fichte a reservoir of strength for modern man to draw upon for racial regeneration and ennoblement. He insisted that Germans had remained closer than other peoples to their primitive origins, preserving both "a truly national language and literature" and "a faith alone among nations in the spirit and infinite." Fichte ridiculed the folklore of mystical

Germanic religionists and insisted upon the regeneration of the entire human race. Nor was Fichte anti-Christian in any sense. 3 For these and other reasons, Herder's and Fichte's ideas were of limited value to the Nazis.

The poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860) scorned a world which he considered "long-winded and shallow," spoiled by "sophistry and too much learning," and Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) insisted that his contemporaries look for direction within their "hidden nature" and heed the "voice of our blood." For Kleist, the deeper loyalties to folk, fatherland, and God transcended "uncertain conscious thoughts and deliberations."⁴

Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) attempted to revive German morale, shattered by the Napoleonic humiliations, by improving the physical conditioning of youth in his *Turnverein*, or gymnastic societies. To the Swedish drill that he adopted he added exercises designed to strengthen the patriotism and moral powers of youth. "Turnvater" Jahn's most lasting contribution to the ideology of German nationalism was "one of the most German of all books," *Das*

Deutsche Volkstum (1810), which was written with religious intensity and served as a handbook for developing both love of fatherland and loathing of foreigners. 5

The founder of the *Turnverein* was lauded by the Nazis as a "political-pedagogical thinker of the first order." Alfred Baeumler, a leading Nazi educational theorist, wrote: "Jahn for the first time used the word 'Reich' . . . in the sense that we today use it. Between Adolf Hitler and Jahn stands no politician or political thinker who has a more valuable philosophy for the preservation of the Reich." Baeumler pointed out with satisfaction that Jahn's scientific romanticism was fundamentally at odds with the universal Reich of the Christian Middle Ages.⁶ The state, according to Jahn, was not a representation of divine perfection but a reflection of the blood purity of the people. "The purer the people the better. . . . A state is nothing without the people, a soulless work of art; the people is nothing without the state, a lifeless, breezy arrangement."⁷

Early nineteenth-century German scholarship became enmeshed in romanticism and transcendental idealism. Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) unified the romantic theories of the *Volkgeist* (folk soul) and the dialectical theories of the organic development of history. He, like Jahn, praised the omnipotent state, against which he considered the sentiments of individuals to be petty and unworthy. For more than a generation, Hegelians held most of the important chairs in German universities, and it is not too extravagant to declare that Prusso-Germany was cast in the Hegelian mold.⁸

Among the leading German historians of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) evoked the

most passionate German nationalism and popularized Hegel's concept of the *Machtstaat*, or power state, as the source of all national blessings. He encouraged Germans to emulate "that pre-severing almost nervous passion which, whether awake or in dreams, can think of only one thing: my country, my country, and always my fatherland."⁹ Obviously, Bismarck's *Realpolitik* had succeeded not only in the arena of war and diplomacy but, more important, in the arena of German thought.

The late nineteenth-century philosophers of pessimism increasingly moved away from their predecessors' idealistic preoccupation with the good, the true, and the beautiful. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) considered such sentiments not only illusory but life-arresting. Furthermore, such softer emotions were at odds with man's instinctive nature, especially with the most fundamental of urges, the will to power, which motivated man to surpass others in his quest for a more robust existence. Man concerned himself with the true, the good, and the beautiful only when it helped him satisfy

his craving for domination.

Nietzsche demanded of his followers a "transvaluation of values," but he viewed these values in no sense as static. As a futurist concerned with developing a race of *Übermenschen*, Nietzsche exhorted the present generation to sacrifice its interests as a selfless gesture in order to accelerate the arrival of the new supermen. As a good European, Nietzsche repudiated the notion of a racial superman as well as any suggestion of anti-Semitism, militarism, or collectivism. But his ideas contributed to the National Socialist mentality in two important respects: the demand for the very souls of his disciples and the conception of man as a mere step in the progression from animal to superman, with no intrinsic value or dignity of his own. 10 "As the ape is the laughing-stock to man," so in the future "man will be the laughing-stock of superman." Nietzsche's firm conviction was that "man is something to be surpassed." In his pursuit of individual excellence, this "anti-Christ" *Übermensch* must avoid the life-arresting effects of the herd at all costs. Nietzsche's philosophy was in fact modernist and had little in common with traditional German thought. 11

Hitler undoubtedly considered himself a liberator of humanity, in a Nietzschean sense, and, freed from the restrictions of conscience, his new German "God-men" could recreate the world in their own image. Because the Nazis strived for this higher level of being, they saw education as an indispensable vehicle for accelerating progress toward this goal. 12 Indeed the Nazi minister of education, Bernhard Rust, stated at an international forum: "*Victory in the political arena meant not the end of the struggle that was on, but the beginning of a process of transformation whereby the total life*

*of the people was to be refashioned in harmony with the philosophy of National Socialism."*¹³

Nietzsche's insanity and the subsequent editing of his later works by his anti-Semitic sister resulted in a misrepresentation of some of his more incoherent philosophy. Nietzsche was made to appear a German racialist, and his sister lived long enough to proclaim Adolf Hitler the "true son of Zarathustra" the *Übermensch*.¹⁴ Ironically, the philosopher's loathing of both nationalism and socialism likely would have earned him residence in a concentration camp had he lived long enough to become a citizen of the Third Reich.

Closer to the substance of National Socialism than Nietzsche's philosophy was the work of Richard Wagner (1813-1883), the Bayreuth master, whose close friendship with Nietzsche was severed because the philosopher could not countenance Wagner's vitriolic anti-Semitism and Nordic racial myths. Called the "herald of Nazism," Wagner inspired the young Hitler, who consistently included him in the pantheon of Nordic heroes. The German Fuehrer's high estimation

of the Bayreuth composer was not diminished by the charge that Wagner lacked *Innigkeit*, the quality of "quiet inwardness" which many considered the basic German trait. 15 In the bombast and eroticism of his music, Wagner attempted to capture the primeval force of the German folk soul, which he felt needed cleansing of such disgusting foreign pollutants as Christianity and democracy. Hitler incorporated elements from both Nietzsche's and Wagner's thought elitist ideas from the philosopher and racialism from the composer.¹⁶

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), the pessimistic proponent of willpower, was another favorite of many National Socialists. Hitler carried a volume of Schopenhauer's works during World War I and, according to several accounts, could recite his philosophy by the page.¹⁷ It is difficult to pinpoint Schopenhauer's precise influence upon Hitler's thought other than to note the tendency of the dictator to emphasize willpower as a means of overcoming material forces (perhaps a distortion of Schopenhauer's intent).

Hitler's educational ideas and his study habits were consistent with the philosophy of Paul de Lagarde (1827-1911), who maintained that education consisted of the ability to separate important from unimportant information and the foresight to stress the former. Hitler practically enshrined this strategy, which suited well his monumental prejudices and his capacity for self-deception. Lagarde insisted that knowledge be direct and useful, that the practical lessons from the past be made amply clear, and most important, that they be derived from the "racial standpoint."¹⁸

As an advocate of general education, Lagarde suggested that specialized studies be postponed until the later years of the

student's schooling when "ingrained national ideals" could neutralize the "worship of technical ability." In cultural history, according to Lagarde, the occurrence of an invention was "less important than the fact that the inventor was a man and a compatriot." For the future of Germany, Lagarde saw little promise in the democratic tides that were rising in the West. He subscribed to the "great man" thesis: "Only a man of great, strong, pure will can help us, not parliaments, nor laws, nor grasping, impotent individuals."¹⁹

Ernst Hasse (1846-1908) and Heinrich Class (1868-1953) organized the *Alldeutscher Verband* (Pan-German Union) in 1891 for the purpose of advancing German colonialism and naval power. The Pan-Germans urged ruthless national expansion, and their influence extended far beyond the exclusive confines of the society's official membership roll. Significantly, they also expressed a keen interest in the fate of their racial brethren around the rim of Bismarck's Reich, brethren whose participation the Pan-Germans coveted to give the Greater-German Reich an adequate economic and territorial base

for global leadership. 20

Two prominent non-German racialists of the late nineteenth century exerted a profound influence upon National Socialism: Arthur Gobineau, a French aristocrat, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an Englishman who married Richard Wagner's daughter and took up residence in Germany, his spiritual home. Both Gobineau and Chamberlain saw race as the key to historical understanding: Aryans created culture and Jews destroyed culture. Upon meeting the young Hitler in 1923, the then feeble old English emigré exclaimed: "With one stroke you have transformed the state of my soul. . . . May God protect you!"²¹ In view of the influence of both Gobineau and Chamberlain, the conclusion must be resisted that the roots of Nazism were exclusively German.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Europe groaned with a dulling sense of unrest and uneasiness, despite the material prosperity of industrialization. One clear indication of trouble in Germany was the Youth Movement, or *Wandervögel*, which attracted an enormous following before the Great War. Although the fighting in the trenches decimated its ranks, after 1918 many surviving members of the *Wandervögel* either regrouped under the same banner or joined paramilitary organizations, such as Hitler's Brown Shirts or the conservative *Stahlhelm*.

Known from the beginning for their habit of viewing life through mercilessly frank lenses, these new realists contributed mightily to the unrest that ultimately destroyed the Weimar Republic. Their prewar defiance of parental authority and their passion for freedom (*Wandervögel* means literally "bird of passage") gave way in the troubled postwar years to an embracing of authority, a remarkable

volte-face by these youthful activists who found in authoritarianism the security bourgeois society could not give them. The apostles of the new *furor teutonicus* demanded unity with a vengeance to sweep away the hated old forms and to replace them with newer, more exclusively German ones. Hitler's movement asserted a new set of values which met the approval of many, though certainly not all, of the disoriented youth.²²

According to Friedrich Meinecke, the individual Nazi represented a definite type, combining two tendencies that emerged, not from the distant past, but from the recent period of industrialization: "one embodied in the politically ignorant technician, the *homo faber*, with 'suppressed metaphysical desires'; the other in the type that exalted only what was utilitarian of which the quintessence was the General Staff with its scientific spirit, hyper-rationality, and energy. These tendencies combined to produce a conscienceless calculator, a monomaniac obsessed with a passion for power, wealth and security."²³

By the end of the third decade of the twentieth century, the German soil was prepared for a totalitarian movement, and the seeds had been implanted. A rapid germination came with the drenching rains of despair and disillusionment. A harvester was needed; and one was ready, a most unlikely harvester, fervently waiting to gather in a bumper crop of the tares of so many sowers.

National Socialism and the Metaphysics of History

The actions of history and the future no longer signify class struggle or warfare between church dogmas, but rather the conflict between blood and blood, race and race, people and people. All this means combat between spiritual principles.

Alfred Rosenberg, *MYTHUS*

The final aim of National Socialist education was metaphysical, however shallow or polluted one might consider the stream of thought from which its ideological tenets issued. For example, Hans Staudinger argues that, rather than being purely biological, Hitler's ideology was historico-metaphysical with a "strong activist, volitional element." Hitler claimed to have unlocked the secret of both the past and the future. That Hitler's savage creed did not satisfy the thirst of rational minds should not obscure from view its essential telic character. The founder of the National Socialist movement proclaimed himself both a politician and a programmatic thinker, and as a practitioner of his own craft, Adolf Hitler achieved hegemony over Europe and threatened to extend his control over other areas of the world as well.

The preponderance of scholarly writing deals with the political threat that the Hitler state posed. The repugnance of the Nazi Fuehrer's craving for domination blinded many scholars to the fact

that National Socialism represented a political system which, according to Ernst Nolte, was "breathtaking in its logical consistency." In a recent study, Eberhard Jäckel contended that by 1928 Hitler achieved a "self-consistent synthesis" in his ideology from which he could logically deduce the political demands required by his movement. 24 The educational system erected by the Nazis also followed the implications of the ideology with remarkable consistency.

Hermann Rauschning's widely accepted thesis (*The Revolution of Nihilism*, 1939) that Nazism was a nihilistic, power-for-its-own-sake philosophy served as the catalyst for the post-1945 philosophical inquiries into the nature of the Hitler phenomenon. Rauschning's view was an extension of the older perception of politics as an end in itself the desire of power-hungry individuals merely to get into office and mark time. As Harold Laski wrote in 1943: "Having himself no commitments to doctrine, being, as *Mein Kampf* made obvious,

above everything an opportunist to whom rational principle was devoid of meaning, he achieved power simply in order to maintain power." Alan Bullock's view of Hitler as a gifted but malignantly flawed opportunist likewise denied Hitler's ideology the status of a *Weltanschauung*.²⁵

It was not difficult to withhold from Hitler the stature of political ideologue when he had so antagonized, insulted, and abused the world. But the opportunistic theories fail to recognize the German Fuehrer's extreme, urgent obsession to secure his nation's future position in the world. Hitler wrote: "One does not make politics in order to be able to die, rather one may at times call upon men to die so that a nation may live."²⁶ Concern for the future introduced the need for a philosophy, goals, programs, procedures, values the characteristics of a teleological phenomenon. No mere will to power concerns itself with the possibility of a deluge in the future.

The survival of a totalitarian system depends upon a logical structure comprehensive enough to apply to all important human activities, including a "final, perfect state of human affairs." Among the most crucial aspects of a political doctrine is the *method* by which the millennium is to be realized, and as Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski pointed out, a totalitarian ideology must contain a "chiliastic claim based upon a radical rejection of the existing society and conquest of the world for a new one."²⁷

A growing body of literature refutes the stubbornly held view that Hitler's movement was ideologically sterile. Several recent studies accept the existence of a *Weltanschauung* and focus attention upon its origins, variously attributed to one or more of the following:

German history, Hitler's Austrian milieu, the World War I experience, the Great Depression, or the political maelstrom that engulfed Germany in the 1920s. Ernst Nolte, a recent scholar, was one of the first to insist in 1963 that Nazism taken in its entirety formed an ideological structure. Nolte rejected the contention that a *Weltanschauung*, to be considered seriously, required a minimum moral or intellectual standard. Its various parts must form a coherent whole, however, and Nolte believed that the Nazi ideology qualified by this standard. Hitler himself observed in his *Zweites Buch*: "The transformation of an idea conception of the highest veracity, based upon a comprehensive *Weltanschauung*, into a definitely limited, tightly organized political community of believers and fighters, unified in spirit and willpower, is the most significant achievement, for the possibility of a victory of the idea depends exclusively on its fortunate resolution."²⁸

Despite the considerable attention to the historical roots of Hitler's ideology, the bedrock of the Nazi conception of life was certainly

the Darwinian struggle for existence. In this struggle, Hitler said, battle is waged without end "against thousands upon thousands of obstacles just as life itself is an eternal struggle against death. . . . Only life is filled with a longing to preserve itself." The view that nations also struggled for survival was obviously social Darwinist in origin, and in order to propagate, nations (races), in the same manner as animal groups, required a certain space in which to live, a certain *Lebensraum*. Only the finitude of space limited the possibilities for the fulfillment of this drive for national self-preservation. Hitler elaborated: "Countless are the species of all the earth's organisms, unlimited at any moment in all individuals is their instinct for selfpreservation as well as their longing for continuance, yet the space in which the whole life process takes place is limited. The struggle for existence and continuance in life waged by billions upon billions of organisms takes place on the surface of an exactly measured sphere." 29

Both the aristocratic principle and the enormous waste inherent in the Darwinian theory became important truths in Hitler's ideology. Since the "precondition for all human progress" was "to breed life as a whole to a higher level," waste was accepted as the "innermost will of nature."³⁰ Hitler simply took this variable waste and applied it to human life in a literal way that undoubtedly would have horrified the staunchest nineteenth-century social Darwinist.

The absence of a living space robbed the Jews of a racial consciousness. Consequently, they lacked a base for the creation of culture, and because they blasphemed this important principle, they deserved extinction. They constituted a race, not a religious community, but they differed in one crucial respect from other

racess of mankind. They lacked a rootedness to the soil which a living space gave a race. Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*: "The Jewish state was never spatially limited in itself; but universally unlimited as to space, though restricted in the sense of embracing but one race. Consequently, this people has always formed a state within other states."³¹

Most early scholars accepted Hitler's claim that his anti-Semitism crystallized in early manhood while he roamed the streets of Vienna and ransacked the bookstalls of the Habsburg capital looking for works to bolster his already formidable prejudices, but Eberhard Jäckel argued convincingly that his mature philosophy was formulated as late as the writing of *Hitler's Zweites Buch* in 1928. In this secret polemic, Hitler's views on the racial question took on a universal quality: "Just as every people as a basic tendency of all its earthly actions possesses a mania for self-preservation as its driving force, likewise is it exactly so with Jewry, too. . . . The foundation of the Aryan struggle for life is the soil." Hence the Jews, having no territory

to defend or expand, "throw the world out of joint" by their unnatural and ahistorical mode of existence: "The Jewish people cannot carry out the construction of a state, viewed in a territorial sense, but as a support of its own existence it needs the work and creative activities of other nations. Thus, the existence of the Jew himself becomes a parasitical one within the lives of other peoples." 32

Deriving his analogies from the study of parasitology, Hitler insisted that the "ultimate goal of the Jewish struggle for existence is the enslavement of productively active peoples." He identified the Jews as "People who can sneak their way into the rest of mankind like drones, to make other men work for them under all sorts of pretexts, can form states even without any definitely delimited living space of their own. This applies first and foremost to a people under whose parasitism the whole of honest humanity is suffering, today more than ever: the Jews."33

Thus the Jewish aim was not the natural desire for more land but the unnatural conspiracy to denationalize the world as a whole. As Jäckel maintained, Hitler perceived the struggle against the Jews not as a national task but as "a task for all mankind, and it had to assume . . . universalist-missionary characteristics."34 The Jewish arsenal of weapons against national consciousness was formidable and included egalitarianism, pacifism, and internationalism.

By accomplishing a consistent fusion of all of his ideas, Hitler possessed an instrument of incalculable importance when he came to power. He could assure European leaders, German and non-German alike, that unless the Jews were suppressed "there would very soon no longer be any struggle for living space, nor therefore

any culture, and consequently nations would die out: not just the German nation, but ultimately all nations." World domination by a superior species was implicit in Hitler's thought. But Hitler amended the evolutionary idea to provide for the possible winding down or degeneration of a superior racial group that mixed its blood with that of inferior races. Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* had already driven the idea of cultural collapse deep into the German psyche, and the sense of dread led many Nazis to the point of paranoia. Hitler warned: "The fall of man in paradise has always been followed by his expulsion from it." This reference to expulsion from paradise was a good example of Hitler's fondness for religious imagery, and his familiarity with the Bible was confirmed by Werner Maser's biography, published in 1971. Hitler also consistently referred to his struggle against the Jews in apocalyptic terms.³⁵

Hitler clung to the belief that he had unraveled history's ultimate secret—the racial myth. War was a normal condition because history in its simplest terms was the struggle of peoples for living space:

"Even wars lose their isolated character of more or less immense surprises; they become integrated instead into a natural, indeed, self-evident, system of a fundamental, well-grounded, permanent development of a people." 36

The Darwinian coarseness of Hitler's view of history should not obscure the metaphysical elements that regularly took precedence over the strictly biological determination of human destiny, as can be clearly seen in his numerous references to the voluntaristic factors in the history of a people. For example, "The importance of the blood value of a people, however, only becomes totally effective when this value is recognized by a people, properly valued and appreciated. Peoples who do not understand this value or no longer have a feeling for it for lack of a natural instinct, thereby immediately also begin to lose it."37

The crucial role which a people played in its own destiny can be seen by examining Hitler's differences with the Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt, who also applied biological laws to the history of peoples but in a more deterministic fashion, limiting the life span of nations to approximately twelve hundred years. Hitler, on the other hand, insisted that death overtook nations only when they ignored "the natural law upon whose observance their survival depends."38 The metaphysical element remained uppermost in Hitler's thinking, which could never be described as truly deterministic in the biological sense. Hitler continued to insist that as long as a few thousand individuals were willing to go to prison for an idea, their cause was not lost.

The German educational system was to bear the brunt of the task of inculcating the proper appreciation of blood value in the people.

The totalitarian system presented radical possibilities to those responsible for educating the youth. Even before the seizure of power, Dr. Joseph Goebbels recorded in his diary lengthy discussions he had with Hitler concerning their plans for the control of education, the cinema, radio, publishing, and other vehicles of "public enlightenment."³⁹ Goebbels's account of these conversations demonstrated his clear awareness that no such offensive on so broad a front had ever been contemplated by a political regime anywhere.

The Evolution of Hitler's Educational Thought

Happy is the generation to which a fortunate destiny has presented a dominating idea, which, lofty and simple, claims the service of all other ideas of the day for itself.

Heinrich von Treitschke, *HISTORISCHE UND POLITISCHE AUFSCHÄTZE*

"There is no enthusiasm greater than that of a young man of thirteen to seventeen years of age. They will gladly let themselves be cut to pieces for the sake of their teacher, if he is a real man. I should very much like to see our youth led into battle by their teachers!"

Adolf Hitler, *SECRET CONVERSATIONS*

National Socialism bore the imprint of one man's ideas as greatly as any ideological system in this century. Hitler's words had the force of law in Greater-Germany, and his ideas provided the intellectual foundation upon which German life rested during the Nazi era. Because of the charismatic nature of Hitler's leadership, his personality and upbringing become matters of critical importance to the student of the period. His unhappy childhood, and more particularly his unpleasant experiences in school, stamped Hitler's mind indelibly.

His generally dismal record in school notwithstanding, Hitler's teachers influenced him extraordinarily, both positively and negatively. Years later, after becoming chancellor of Germany, Hitler said of his teachers, "I cannot endure schoolmasters. As always the exceptions confirm the rule, and that's why young people became all the more attached to the exceptional ones." 40 These words, spoken during World War II to associates in his military headquarters on the eastern front, demonstrate that his opinion of teachers had not changed in the years since he wrote *Mein Kampf*. Both in his writings and in his conversations, Hitler never passed up an opportunity to berate his instructors. An example is the following from *Hitler's Secret Conversations*. "We pupils of old Austria were brought up to respect old people and women. But on our professors we had no mercy; they were our natural enemies. The majority of them were somewhat mentally

deranged. . . . Those among them who were good fellows we treated with utmost affection, but they were few and far between."⁴¹

Hitler accused teachers of invariably being those who could succeed at nothing else. "Their external appearance exuded uncleanness; their collars were filthy and greasy, and their beards were unkempt." The visceral nature of Hitler's prejudices against teachers revealed his deep resentment that those who taught him could fail to take notice of his precocity. Possibly because of his own frustrations in school, Hitler came to believe that formal instruction stifled and corrupted genius. The authorities in the academies felt threatened by their gifted pupils, and consequently, when, talented pupils displayed their knowledge, these dilettantes rose up with "their whole plumage ruffled." Nothing short of a complete transformation of academic life could banish the nonsense that impeded effective instruction.⁴² In his attack on academic tradition, Hitler obviously

ignored the preeminent position which the German educational system occupied in world opinion in the decades before he came to power, the most conspicuous proof being the profusion of Nobel Prizes won by his countrymen. 43

Although the majority of his teachers aroused Hitler's unqualified disgust, he genuinely liked a few of them and in turn was greatly influenced by them. Hitler admired his science teacher, Professor Theodore Gissinger, although the feeling was apparently less than mutual, as shown by Gissinger's testimony at Hitler's trial for high treason in 1923: "As far as I was concerned, Hitler left neither a favorable nor an unfavorable impression in Linz. He was by no means a leader of his class." Although "slender and erect, he was pallid and very thin, almost like a consumptive, his gaze unusually open, his eyes brilliant." Other contemporaries remarked that Hitler's native intelligence was unfortunately impaired by his lack of selfcontrol, argumentative disposition, and inflexibility.⁴⁴

Dr. Leopold Poetsch, a history instructor and a fiery German nationalist, perhaps holds the distinction of being the individual who bent the twig at an early age and headed his irresponsible student down the path that eventually proved fatal for millions. Hitler paid his mentor a glowing tribute in *Mein Kampf*:

This old gentleman's manner was as kind as it was determined, his dazzling eloquence not only held us spellbound but actually carried us away. Even today I think back with gentle emotion on this gray-haired man who, by the fire of his narratives, sometimes made us forget the present; who, as if by enchantment, carried us into past times and, out of the millennial veils of mist, molded dry historical memories into living reality. On such occasions we sat there, often aflame with enthusiasm, and sometimes even moved to tears.⁴⁵

Hitler's debt to Poetsch may have been an afterthought, or it may simply have been another of his clever ploys to suggest that Providence had guided his path from youth. In any event, Hitler stoutly maintained that Poetsch's influence made him a "young revolutionary."⁴⁶ Calling his contact with Poetsch a stroke of fate accorded perfectly with the messianic image that Hitler assiduously cultivated. The practitioner of the "Big Lie" concerned himself little with truth, especially when his political instinct told him that an advantage could be gained by a gross fabrication. Young Hitler's grade of "fair" in history suggests that when Poetsch converted the wayward youth to the cause of nationalism, he failed to make of him a conscientious scholar.

After withdrawing from school at the age of sixteen without earning a certificate, Hitler showed his disgust by getting drunk for the first and only time in his life. The wounds to his self-esteem, incurred during his unhappy school days, festered unhealed in his mind, poisoning his relations with educated men to the day of his death.

Following Hitler's ignominious withdrawal from school, and the death of his father, he shied away from work but engaged his vivid imagination in fantasies of a brilliant future for himself. A voracious reader, Hitler subscribed to both the Library of Adult Education in Linz and the Museum Society, from which he borrowed books on a wide variety of subjects. His study habits were unorthodox, but German history and mythology were among his favorite topics.

Young Hitler journeyed to Vienna in 1909 and applied for entrance to the Art Academy, but he was rejected on two occasions. The majority of Hitler's biographers, including William L. Shirer, author of one of the most widely read works on the Third Reich, have ridiculed his amateurish efforts to establish himself in the field of art. Only one conclusion seemed possible. Hitler possessed no talent. Werner Maser, a German historian, more recently undertook a thorough and detached examination of Hitler's youth and reached a different conclusion: Hitler's failure to gain entry into the Academy of Art in Vienna was the result of two cruel accidents of fate. Hitler's best watercolors were "thoroughly competent; if not outstanding," according to Maser's investigation, but in the first examination he submitted no paintings or sketches that contained human heads. 47 Contrary to the conclusion of

Shirer and others, Maser presented evidence that Hitler was indeed capable of painting the human form. His interest lay in buildings, however, and even though he possessed a variety of works he had painted, he submitted to the examiners only those that interested him most.

During Hitler's subsequent year of intense study for his second attempt to enter the Academy of Art, he requested that Max Zaeper, a recognized artist in Vienna, render an opinion of his work, and the opinion was most encouraging. Zaeper, along with fellow artist Ferdinand Staeger, concluded that the young painter "shows quite exceptional talent." When the time for his second examination approached, fate intervened again: Hitler's mother died of breast cancer, leaving the despondent youth so shaken that he failed to pass even the preliminary test, a hurdle to be surmounted before he could display his art work for the judges. Thus paintings that conceivably could have gained him entrance into the academy went unexamined, and Hitler's long-sought dream of seriously pursuing art as a career was abandoned.⁴⁸

According to Maser, Hitler's years in Vienna were not "frittered away among tramps and petty thieves," as many biographers would have us believe. With his share of his father's inheritance and his orphan's pension, he had, for most of his stay in Vienna, an income comparable to that of a beginning attorney, and on this sum a single man could live comfortably. Nor were Hitler's ideas derived from "riffraff in dosshouses." Ample evidence suggests that "he may have reached his conclusions as a result of intensive study." The important question, of course, involved the content of his reading, and Maser argued convincingly that Hitler read more than the disreputable racial pamphlets, which had been widely suspected of being his major reading material during this period. 49

Hitler's well-known refusal to acknowledge the source of his ideas rendered any investigations of his reading habits difficult, but Maser built his case around such testimony as that of August Kubizek, Hitler's friend from the Vienna period, and the Popp family, with whom Hitler boarded in the months before the outbreak of World War I. Kubizek insisted that Hitler read prodigiously and that it was "always books and more books . . . piled up all around him." Kubizek added: "I cannot imagine Hitler without books."⁵⁰ But Kubizek gave little specific information about the subject matter of his reading. Josef Popp, Hitler's Munich landlord, "often found him reading Schopenhauer and Plato" (Plato's ideas crop up frequently in Hitler's "Table Talk.") His army comrades reported that Hitler quoted both philosophers by heart. Herr Popp's son, who later immigrated to the United States, told Maser in an interview that during the period 1913-14, his father's eccentric boarder had him check out and return to libraries scores of books about every conceivable topic.⁵¹

According to Hans Zeverus Ziegler, Hitler had a keen interest in United States history, and Hans Frank claimed that while in prison in Landsberg, Hitler read extensively from Treitschke, Chamberlain, Ranke, Marx, and Bismarck. He also had a vivid interest in architecture, art, military history, general history, and technology. Even Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, the only one of Hitler's generals whose reputation survived World War II, admitted that "Hitler possessed an astonishingly retentive memory and an imagination that made him quick to grasp all technical matters and problems of armaments."⁵²

There is no doubt that Hitler's method of study was irregular, if not Bohemian, and that he lacked the self-discipline to pursue a single program of study to completion. He was alternately provoked either to wrath or to enthusiasm by what he read. As Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

By "reading" to be sure, I mean perhaps something different than the average member of our so-called "intelligentsia." I know people who "read" enormously . . . yet whom I would not describe as "well-read." True, they possess a mass of "knowledge," but their brain is unable to organize and register the material they have taken in. . . . On the other hand, a man who possesses the art of correct reading will . . . instinctively and immediately perceive everything which in his opinion is worth permanently remembering, either because it is suited to his purpose or generally worth knowing. . . . The art of reading, or of learning, is . . . *to retain* the essential and forget the non-essential.

53

Hitler remembered his time in Vienna as the most difficult yet the most valuable period of his life, not because he learned to study but because he came to know life. His failures accentuated his already pronounced resentments, and the churning maelstrom of Austrian politics further agitated him, intensifying his prejudices against the non-German nationalities. In addition to the knowledge gained from legitimate reading, this bookish vagrant picked up ideas raw and unrefined from the environment of an empire dying of indigestion.

Having rejected Austria's foul morass of nationalities, Hitler crossed the German border to take up residence in Munich some months before the outbreak of the Great War, an event that ended his aimless existence. At last Hitler had a cause to consume his energies, and months in the thick of fighting brought him commendations for bravery but no appreciable rank or responsibility. Hitler's little-known letters to his landlord, Josef Popp, exposed a rarely seen side of his personality. The descriptive detail of some of the early engagements by this frustrated artist are

among the best that exist. Following the presentation of his first Iron Cross in 1914, Hitler wrote Herr Popp a letter that confirms both his sincerity and his pathetic hunger for recognition: "It was the adjutant, Lt. Eichelsdörfer, who put me up for it and yesterday, 2 December, it was actually the Iron Cross. It was the happiest day of my life. . . . I beg you, dear Herr Popp, to keep a copy of the newspaper with the announcement of my decoration. I'd like to have it for a souvenir, if so be the Lord spares my life."⁵⁴ One must remember in amazement that the author of such human sentiments later perpetrated cold-blooded atrocities against millions of human beings and left an entire continent in a state of physical destruction.

Four years of vicious combat crystallized Hitler's corroding hatreds and resentments, especially his anti-Semitism. Blinded by a gas attack in the last weeks of the war and hospitalized in Pomerania, where

he received news of the fatherland's capitulation, Hitler feared that without eyesight he would be reduced to begging for a living in a Reich controlled by the despised Marxists and Jews. The future seemed almost too terrible to contemplate. Emotionally crushed and adrift in despair, Hitler in 1919 "resolved to become a politician." 55

Even with his impressive smattering of learning, a more unlikely hero could hardly have come forth to rescue the fatherland and to lead Germans out of the wilderness. But Hitler apparently harbored few doubts about his abilities, despite almost insurmountable handicaps. Indeed, in the immediate postwar environment, his military superiors became so impressed with his ability to absorb information that they not only entrusted him with the responsibility of education officer for the regiment but also gave serious consideration to publishing his political ideas.⁵⁶ Hitler attributed his success to a rare ability to combine thought and action. He wrote: "At long intervals of human history it may occasionally happen that the practical politician and the political philosopher are one. The more intimate the union, the greater are his political difficulties. Such a man does not labor to satisfy demands that are obvious to every philistine; he reaches forward towards ends that are comprehensible only to the few. Therefore, his life is torn between hatred and love."⁵⁷

As regimental education officer, Hitler attended lectures at the University of Munich, where his studies included the following: German history after the Reformation (Alexander von Müller); the political history of the war (Karl Graf von Bothmer); socialism in theory and practice (Bothmer); German economic conditions and

peace terms (Dr. Michael Horlacher); and the correlations between domestic and foreign policy (Bothmer).⁵⁸

At the university, Hitler attended lectures by various authorities, including the distinguished historian Alexander von Müller, who stressed that positive forces emerged inescapably from the soil, a theory at the root of the *volkish* spirit. Some scholars believe that Müller influenced Hitler's rhetorical style; both men preferred the rich Bavarian vernacular and words with emotive connotations. Professor von Müller was likely the first person of any consequence to notice Hitler's rhetorical talents. He described an incident in which Hitler held his audience in thrall:

My lecture and the lively discussion that followed it were over and the students had already begun to leave when my attention was caught by a small group of people. They were standing spell-bound round a man who was vehemently haranguing them in a curiously guttural voice and with ever mounting passion. I had the peculiar feeling that

he was responsible for their excitement, which in turn stimulated his eloquence. His face was pale and thin, his forehead partially concealed by an unmilitary lock of hair. He wore the close-cropped moustache and his strikingly large, pale blue eyes shone with cold fanatical light. 59

Hitler's self-education continued after he took over leadership of the fledgling National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). An early mentor and father-figure, poet Dietrich Eckart, published a pamphlet, *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: Dialogue between Adolf Hitler and Myself*, which examined in depth more than a half dozen major works on world Jewry. The two men made penetrating references to the Talmud and the Old Testament. Evidence also suggests that by 1923 Hitler had closely studied *Der Rassenkampf* by an Austrian Jew, Ludwig Gumplowicz, and *A Study of the Popular Mind*, Gustav LeBon's classic on crowd behavior. His *Lebensraum* theories were reinforced by his readings of Karl Haushofer, Sir Halford Mackinder, and Friedrich Ratzel.⁶⁰

Hitler was an ideologue and an intellectual to the extent that he allowed his ideas, however crude or adolescent, to shape his actions. Between the writing of *Mein Kampf* (1924) and the completion of the *Second Book* (1928), he had committed himself to a number of fixed ideological assumptions to which he clung with sleuthlike persistence for the remaining years of his life.⁶¹ That he could scandalously violate his principles, as he did by signing the non-aggression pact with Stalin in 1939, proved Hitler's cynicism but not a total absence of principle, as subsequent events clearly show. In 1941 he reverted with a vengeance to his previous anticommunist fixation.

As the political creature par excellence, Hitler recognized the importance of unalterable ideas in motivating the masses, and unalterable ideas depend upon metaphysical supports. At the height of his military triumphs in 1941, with Russia seemingly prostrate before his onrushing panzers, the Nazi dictator declared that the Bolsheviks had erred grievously when they assailed the idea of a Supreme Being: "It's a fact that we're feeble creatures, and that a creative force exists. To seek to deny it is folly. In that case it's better to believe something than nothing at all." This statement obviously belongs in the same category with his declaration that any command or any action is preferable to inaction. Thus either to hesitate to act or to admit that one's actions proceeded from a mental state short of absolute certitude was in the Third Reich an inexcusable confession of weakness before a foe. "Whether we rely on the catechism or on philosophy, we have possibilities in reserve, whilst they [the Bolsheviks] with their purely materialistic conception, can only devour one another."⁶²

Here Hitler came close to admitting that the infallibility of National Socialist doctrine was irrelevant as long as Germans believed in its veracity.

British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper found no other explanation for Hitler's miraculous career than his application of his mental powers to the basic political and historical problems of his day. 63 Werner Maser pointed out that even the most cursory glance at Hitler's handwritten notes for his speeches is convincing proof that their author was a man "with a remarkable memory and truly astonishing mental resources."64 Hitler's claim that he represented the rare combination of philosopher-politician was partially justified, according to Trevor-Roper. In situations in which he showed a willingness to compromise, Hitler's attitude was like that of the religious layman who accepts the truth of the creed but finds the priests' doctrinal hairsplitting intolerable. Accordingly, Hitler could laugh at the immovable, priestlike fanaticism of a Heinrich Himmler or an Alfred Rosenberg.65

Hitler's keen political insight and his often impressive store of knowledge contrasted with the barrenness of his spiritual development. The hard, clear, monolithic crust concealed an inner yawning emptiness devoid of any trace of humanity or sympathy for human frailty. His contempt for weakness was exceeded only by his hatred for pity masquerading as sympathy for weakness. Yet at the same time, Hitler detested moral strength in others. His secretary opened a most revealing window to his mind. Although he ranged over "almost every field of human thought, I nevertheless felt that something was missing. Even now I cannot exactly define it," she reported. "But it seems to me that his spate

of words lacked the human note, the spiritual quality of a cultivated man."⁶⁶

In the whole of his extensive library collection, the Fuehrer's secreatry could find not a single volume "on which the human spirit had left its trace." Hugh Trevor-Roper characterized Hitler's mind as a "huge barbaric monolith" remarkable both for its "giant strength and savage genius" but surrounded by a "festering heap of refuse old tins and dead vermin, ashes and eggshells and ordurethe intellectual detritur of centuries."⁶⁷ The dimensions of a mind at the same time so penetrating and so foul are awesome to consider.

Hitler's marked tendency toward extremes was the most obvious features of his distorted thinking. One celebrated example was his distaste for the opinions of others when these opinions contrasted with his own, and another example was his utter inability to accept blame for his own mistakes. His extensive reading and study could not erase the feelings of intellectual inferiority that had built up and corroded his mind since his childhood in Austria.⁶⁸ Magnanimity

could not grow in a mind poisoned by insecurity. Even as head of the German state, Hitler continued the habit of shifting to others the blame for his shortcomings. Surely he must have been, as Trevor-Roper stated, the "coarsest, cruellest, least magnanimous conqueror the world has ever known." 69

The National Socialist philosophy included ideas that were well suited to salve the German psyche, so grievously wounded in the first decades of the twentieth century. Intellectual ferment, military defeat, and economic prostration called for extraordinary remedies, but those put forward by both the democratic and socialistic parties of the Weimar Republic failed to satisfy the metaphysical needs of the German people. Hitler brazenly offered a substitute revelation of a new world and his remedy was accepted.

The educational dimension of Hitler's new vision was admittedly severe. "My pedagogy is hard. . . . In my elite schools a youth will be raised up before whom the world will tremble." The Fuehrer left no doubt that the education of this new youth would liberate the instincts, and from their eyes would radiate the spirit of "the free, magnificent beast of prey."70

Chapter Three

The Apocalyptic Function of History in the National Socialist Schools

The conclusion which we drew . . . was that our first task, if we were to control the German academic world, was to forge the needed weapon. . . . There was need, we learned, of spiritual weapons if a decisive victory was to be won.

NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMANY AND THE PURSUIT OF LEARNING Walter Frank

The Nazis insisted that their students study history not merely as persons but as Germans. The design of the Nazi histories was thus calculated to accentuate the student's sense of Germanness. The originality of these texts was the result of two characteristics: the tone of urgency and immediacy and the melancholy preoccupation with death and sacrifice. The authors accelerated the momentum of the textbooks by their constant dramatization of events involving fervent emotions and irrationality, thereby removing the student's restraint and objectivity. The reader was swept along by an irresistible hidden current.

The Nazis took unprecedented liberties with the historical sources for the early Germanic period. They claimed that the superior Germanic race originated from an accident of nature and evolved within a type of racial incubator as a particularly resourceful and hardy breed of humanity but one that was required to be ever vigilant to protect the blood purity of its members.

The educational value of an interpretation of history, according to the Nazis, lay in its ability to shape attitudes that henceforth would

determine both the student's actions and his view of reality. The nature of history made it "the most suitable teacher," but the aim of historical study was not the development of a "contemplative,

scientifically critical, or aesthetic outlook" but the preparation of the student for mass action. 1

The history of Germany, like that of ancient Israel, hinged on the peoples' adherence to the divine will. But Hitler recognized only one divine commandment: "Thou shalt preserve the species." The superior leader with an iron will could undo the mischief caused by a multitude of lesser mortals, so German students were told that they had the power to control the outcome of the historical process. The task of education was to render permanent the transformation of national life wrought by their great leader.²

Nazi educators recognized that more than a crusading impulse was needed to consolidate the changes made in 1933. As Walter Frank warned: "It became clear that youthful élan did not of itself suffice to make the establishment of National Socialism the controlling force with respect to cultural affairs." A decisive victory required "spiritual weapons . . . over and above the glowing enthusiasm of the years of battle, over and above the necessary techniques of reorganization."³

Because the struggle for survival was the source of human progress, education was intended to equip the individual to prevail in this competition. Because struggle preordained the triumph of the strong and justified the elimination of the weak, education must glorify the *sine qua non* of racial supremacy: hardness.

Although school was one of the agencies whose leaders could be identified or could "select themselves," war was both the ultimate struggle and the ultimate "selection agency" for leaders. The textbooks depicted war as a "purification rite," which distilled the

racial qualities necessary to ensure the continued preeminence of the folk in history.

The Organization and Design of the Textbooks

Especially in historical instruction an abridgement of the material must be undertaken.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

All of the philosophical principles prized by the Nazis could be developed within the discipline of history; therefore this discipline played an indispensable role in the propagation of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. A historical study of the folkish struggle for world preeminence would lend credence to Hitler's cosmological view that the nature of reality was the struggle for survival.

The constant revision of the German past to conform to the racial point of view continued to claim Hitler's lively interest throughout the period of the Third Reich, but those responsible for interpreting the past never completed this assignment to their master's satisfaction.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler lamented that Germans "studied history more" but "applied it worse" than any other people. Particularly wretched, in Hitler's opinion, was the stress upon "facts, dates, birthdays, names, etc." 4 In the place of such trivia, he called for an emphasis upon the "broad, clear lines" of history, and, if necessary to realize the regime's political aims, an "abridgement of the material." The aim was not simply to "know the past" but to "find an instructor for the future." Hitler elaborated upon this point: For the average man, "history exists primarily to give him that measure of historical insight which is necessary for him to take a position of his own on the political issues of his nation."5

The ripened grain from Hitler's philosophical storehouse became the diet of German youth. Following the seizure of power in 1933, Hitler ordered an increase in the class time allotted to history and to other subjects touching on *Deutschtum*. Other changes followed: reduction in the number of elective courses and in the time for religious instruction, rigidification of scheduling, and uniform regulation of school hours. Even at the secondary level, changes were made to prevent the student's specialization. No course or group of courses was to be studied too intensively. These changes reflected not only National Socialist ideological preferences but also Hitler's own dislike of specialists.

The history textbook, like everything else in Hitler's Germany, was designed to serve a political end. The selection and arrangement of materials constituted a primary means by which the Nazis inculcated the belief in their own pattern of history; therefore, the design of textbooks involved not merely the question of epistemology but a far deeper metaphysical concern. The Reich

government in a directive advised textbook writers in 1939 that the past was to be used to convert the doubting and unbelieving to silence the critics of National Socialist domination.⁶

Since Nazi education, as Goebbels admitted, was attempting a system that had not been tried before, the arrangement of text materials was altered accordingly. On May 9, 1933, following a meeting of the Conference of Ministers, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, the interior minister, issued a directive that history be given "a commanding position in the schools." The directive further stated: "In contrast to tendencies in other directions, care must be taken that the presentation of the appropriate cultural history, important as it is for characterizing greater periods of development, must not be used to obscure the *political* history which determines the fate of peoples." The interior minister's guidelines called for increased emphasis upon race in the study of history, and, he added, historical instruction "at all levels must interweave the idea of the hero in its German expression,

associated with the idea of the leader of our day, which is linked with the oldest archetype of the German past." 7

Until 1937, despite the energetic efforts of the highest-ranking government and school officials, instruction in the *Volksschulen* continued to rely heavily upon the directions and plans of the Weimar Republic. In 1937, however, a decree from the Ministry of Education coordinated under the regime the *Volksschulen* and other educational institutions, the party organization, and the army in order to "educate the German youth for membership in the racial community and full commitment to the Fuehrer."8

Lest German history teachers fret over the loss of objectivity in their profession, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* (General German teacher's journal), on August 9, 1933, derided objective history as "only one of the numerous fallacies of liberalism." Insisting that National Socialists would approach history "impartially but as Germans," the article concluded: "It is not man in general who studies history but a German, a Frenchman, an Englishman. . . . The 'man' of liberalism is only an artificial creation. In reality he does not exist; there are only men who belong to a definite nation or race. . . . We want a historical science for Germans."9

An examination of Nazi history textbooks published after 1933 indicates that the Education Ministry's general guidelines were followed consistently, even to the point of bowdlerizing the texts. The Nazi regime did not attain total control over the preparation of textbooks until 1939, however, after which time books could be published only if they had the approval of a special commission headed by Phillipp Bouhler, an ardent Nazi ideologue. According

to one German educational authority, Bouhler bears major responsibility for "the radicalization of the schoolbooks."¹⁰

The radicalization of historical writing demanded that history be teleological written with an overarching purpose. Instructions to the teacher training institutions directed that "history should not be presented to our youth as a chronicle which indiscriminately strings events together, but as a drama."¹¹ An opponent of the radicals, Hans Rothfels, maintained that the strongest inroads into the historical profession came not from established university professors but from "tempestuous secondary schoolmasters or laymen," who "rushed to produce a flood of brochures and books to proclaim the new historical dogma," which insisted that "German history could only be apprehended by the eyes of the blood." Rothfels confessed that the university community was somewhat surprised and deeply embarrassed by the spate of swastika armbands and Hitler salutes which appeared on their campuses, as well as by "the saturation with military and biological phraseology."¹²

Walter Frank, a student of Alexander von Müller (Hitler's instructor in Munich), made the most immediate impression as a historian who adhered to the party line, and he basked in the favor of the regime as the "Treitschke of the Third Reich." In a speech to the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany, Frank stated: "The actual engine should be manipulated by young activists . . . by messengers of the new science . . . the spiritual S.A." 13 The most influential of Frank's "young activists" was Dietrich Klagges, the most prolific writer of Nazi history textbooks. An extremist who perceived his task as that of eliciting "right ways of thinking" and "arousing enthusiasm for the movement," Klagges advocated total subordination to the will of the Fuehrer. He interpreted history as an "eschatological process"; world history was a logical progression toward National Socialism: "In 2,000 years of history we are the most fortunate German generation." 14

According to Klagges, the meaning of history could be summed up by five principles:

1. Life is struggle.
2. The individual is nothing without the Fuehrer.
3. The folk is the future.
4. Compatriots are comrades of fate.
5. The blood is the most valuable inheritance.

The history textbooks edited by Klagges (a series entitled *Volk und Fuehrer*) were strewn with racialist and nationalist aphorisms, such as the following: "Inheritance is more powerful than instruction"; "A folk without soil goes under"; "Between peoples there is no equality but a hierarchy"; "The Jews are our misfortune"; "The racial question is the key to world history"; and "Aryan blood alone creates high culture." 15

Because Germany's salvation in the contemporary era had come through political struggle, the textbooks often permitted the pupil to gaze upon the

lofty summit of his nation's recent history before descending into the depressing chaos of the distant past. This reverse chronological tactic also assured adequate coverage of the most recent happenings, which were sometimes neglected because of time limitations when placed at the end of the book. In textbooks for younger children, the materials included biographical sketches of their nation's heroes, which were arranged to begin with Hitler and proceed in reverse order. The loss of both perspective and continuity were only two of the numerous difficulties with this approach.

In a *Klasse-1* textbook (*Geschichtsbuch für die Deutsche Jugend*) these problems can be illustrated by a glance at a portion of the table of contents:16

Adolf Hitler	5
Hindenburg	19
Hermann Goering	23
Horst Wessel	28
Herbert Norkus, the Hitler Youth from Beusselkietz	32
Albert Leo Schlageter	34
Otto Wedigen and U-90	39
General Litzmann, the Lion of Bschesiny	44
Sepp Innerkapfler	46
Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen	51

In this book there was little difference in the amount of coverage accorded authentic heroes such as Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and obscure, petty martyrs such as Herbert Norkus, the young Hitler Youth member whose only distinction was his murder by the communists, and Albert Leo Schlageter, a saboteur executed by the French. Only two of the thirty-three individuals included in this textbook were females, and the fame of none of the thirty-three was entirely free of military or paramilitary association.

Die Ewige Strasse, a textbook written for students in the *Hauptschule*, had the most sophisticated organizational schema of any examined in my research. The reverse chronological arrangement included two major subdivisions: "Heroes of Our Time" and "Deeds of Our Ancestors." In the first subdivision the narrative was woven around the lives of individual heroes. The anonymity of preliterate society precluded such a practice in the second subdivision, which focused on the sturdy German peasant collectively to epitomize superior Germanic traits. In the section "Heroes of Our Time," the first eighteen pages were devoted to a detailed examination of the career of "Unser Fuehrer." Even the table of contents assured the student that he lived in an exceptional epoch of history. It was repeatedly emphasized not only that the student should feel privileged to

be alive at that particular juncture of history but also that the nature of the times imposed special obligations upon him. 17

The chapter arrangement for *Ewige Strasse* was as follows (subchapters are omitted):

Heroes of Our Time

Our Fuehrer

In Our Youth: Heroes of Greater-Germany

1933

1942

In the Time of Our Parents: Adolf Hitler's Brown Fighters

1918

1933

In the Time of Our Grandparents: Soldiers of the World War

1914

1918

In the Time of Our Great-Grandparents: Men of Bismarck's Reich

1871

1914

Deeds of Our Ancestors

From the Earliest Times

Northern Peoples Are Our Ancestors

4,000 B.C.

1,800 B.C.

Concerning the Original Germans

1,800 B.C.

800 B.C.

Germans and Romans

800 B.C.

476 A.C.

The Proud Greater-German Period

476 A.D.

1,000 A.D.

The young activists could make even a table of contents provocative. The following is a partial listing from *So Ward Das Reich*, written by Dietrich Klagges and Fritz Stoll: 18

"The Chaos of 1848"

"The Encirclement of Germany"

"Germany's Enslavement"

"The Fuehrer Builds Greater-Germany"

"Our Enemies and Friends in the World"

"Greater-Germany's Fight for Freedom"

"Fuehrer, We Thank You!"

The Heightened Tempo of the Textbooks

In due time a religion of light will be revealed by truly inspired heaven-stormers who will restore the corrupted and degenerated race once more to the Gods.

Ernst Moritz Arndt, *GEIST DER ZEIT*

Apart from structural changes and unique arrangements of subject matter, the Nazi textbooks also had a distinctive tone and rhythm. The authors said little or nothing that was entirely novel, nor did they justify their nation's actions by any unique series of arguments,

yet these textbooks exuded the profound sense of urgency and immediacy that characterized the Nazi philosophy.

The strident tone in the school literature was but one part of an inclusive phenomenon that absorbed public life in the Third Reich: the infusing of Germans with a new faith in themselves. The regime proclaimed from every quarter the message that Germans were marching in irresistible tempo toward a better future German millennium, in which the general welfare took precedence over that of the individual.

During the early years of the regime, a throng of foreign visitors confirmed the new sense of hope and courage which Germans displayed (at least outwardly) under National Socialism. The despairing mood of the "end of the world" and the "decline of the West" seemed to have given way before the regenerative powers of the Third Reich. 19

On August 5, 1933, the Educational Ministry in Prussia issued a directive that history be taught in such a way as to unlock the "power to carry away the heart and arouse that enthusiasm without which for the majority of pupils the study of history readily becomes only a wearisome amassing of facts."²⁰ There is ample evidence that the suggestions of this directive were enthusiastically implemented.

Even the pages of the *Kinderfibel* (Children's fables) were strewn with rousing stories of Germany's martial glory and heroic deeds. In reading material prepared for six- and seven-year-olds, pictures of armed columns of battle-hardened veterans in combat gear were interspersed with stories of rabbits, robins, and flowers.²¹ Swastika

banners were hoisted in the midst of children playing in sandpiles, and one lad was pictured riding a scooter with a *Hakenkreuz* pendant attached to his toy. There were also numerous pictures of a smiling Fuehrer surrounded by German children many with eyes transfixed. It was not uncommon for the authors to build up a shrill tempo and then break into the lines of a familiar national patriotic song. For example, in exhorting the children to ever greater efforts for the fatherland, the author of a selection in *Kinderfibel* ended the piece with an exhortation similar in style to the battle cry of a cavalry leader preparing his men to attack:

And then all the men and women sing in all of Germany, in each village and in each city:

"Germany, Germany Over All,
Over All in the World!"

And they also sing that other song:

"Raise high the flags!
Stand rank on rank together."

And everyone thinks: "I will do my work well in the new year for my beloved fatherland." 22

The tempo of children's readers is graphically illustrated by a selection appearing in *Guck in die Welt*, entitled "The Fuehrer Comes," which featured a young lad by the name of Klaus. "Today Klaus's mother does not need to wake him. He springs from bed on his own. Today is an important holiday." The description of this important event was apparently designed to arouse the wildest enthusiasm in the children:

From the windows the swastika flags wave. . . . In the shop windows stand pictures of the Fuehrer. . . . The boys climb up trees. . . . When a flag-bearer passes, Klaus raises his right arm in salute. All at once Klaus hears heil salutes from afar. The shouts sound ever nearer. And then Klaus sees the Fuehrer. He stands in the car and waves in a friendly manner. Heil! Heil! calls Klaus, as loud as he can. What a pity, the Fuehrer is already past! But Klaus continually calls: Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!23

A description of the Battle of Ypres in 1914 contained all of the ingredients for a rousing history lesson. An attack across barren, shell-marked fields had bogged down, causing the deaths of thousands of Germans.

Then someone broke into "Germany, Germany Over All!" And soon the song was transmitted from company to company; Germany's youth stormed singing to their deaths. . . . The war volunteers had shown that they understood death exactly as did the old soldiers. In the machine guns' hail of iron they had all become comrades: workers, students, and journeymen. In battle as in the dawn of death the faith in a new beautiful Germany had arisen in them. This faith

gave them strength to conquer in a superhuman fashion everything that now could still come.²⁴

In a more subtle vein, the textbook writers frequently employed a gambit perfected by Hitler in his public addresses: demolishing the critics of his regime by placing his cause on the defensive.²⁵ This tactic also served to bring the underground criticisms of the regime into the open, where they could be ridiculed or refuted in the best possible light. In the following account, which described the plight of Germany before the Nazis came to power, the refutation came in a flood of adulation for the successful Fuehrer:

Economic decline and ethical collapse went hand in hand. The Jews also led in these. They cried: "Down with race-consciousness and family awareness!" In the newspapers, in books, in film, on radio they made fun of and undermined what was sacred to us Germans. "Nordic man, German way, Loving mother, Suffering father, Growing children?" Nonsense: Medieval point of view . . . "Rat pests" they called our soldiers in the trenches. "Oxen who were led to the slaughter" . . . "kill the German military." . . . When will the Savior come to this country? Now, he is under way! Already the brown columns marched in the streets, and the Fuehrer drummed and drummed: "Germany Awake!" 26

This brief passage accomplished several purposes: it promoted anti-Semitism, reminded readers of Germany's terrible plight before the rise of Hitler, revealed the harsh skepticism of Hitler's program on the part of his enemies, and explained his role as savior.

The readers' moods were also manipulated by a constant, morbid preoccupation with death, suffering, and sacrifice. Four consecutive selections in a single reader dealt with the lamentation of the death of a comrade. There were incessant reminders that in Germany's liberation many comrades had fallen.²⁷

The subject of sacrifice was expressed in the almost continuous stream of written material related to war, as for example: "Tens of thousands of scholars, students, workers, seventeen-year-olds and men in offices and professions drove themselves in enthusiastic crowds to the camps in order to report as volunteers. Their only fear: not to be accepted or to be too late."²⁸

A poem included in a book of readings by Heinrich Lersch expressed the callowness toward war that was characteristic of the

Nazi authors.

Let Me Go

Let me go, Mother, let me go!
All of that crying is of no more use to us;
For we go to defend the Fatherland.
Let me go, Mother, let me go!
In a last embrace I will kiss your lips;
Germany must live, even if we must die!²⁹

Many Nazis considered the Free Corps fighter Albert Leo Schlageter both the epitome of the hero and the first martyr of World War II, although he died in 1923 before a French firing squad for blowing up a railroad bridge during the occupation of the Ruhr. Emotional accounts of the execution of this pure-souled warrior

appeared on the pages of almost every history book in the Third Reich. His life and death symbolized the transition from front fighter in the Great War to political soldier in the turbulent postwar years.

Men of Schlageter's mien were psychologically unwilling to face the end of the Great War, Germany's defeat, or the democratic Weimar government. Schlageter's defiance and sensational martyrdom attracted the fascination of Nazi publicists, who were always on the lookout for rousing material. Even his classical betrayal added to the drama of his life. While brooding over his imminent death, Schlageter could say, "I have never whimpered for mercy, and I will not do so now." To his parents he wrote: "Since 1914 I have sacrificed out of my pure love and pure loyalty my entire strength and labor for my German homeland. When the emergency was great, I advanced to help. The last thing yesterday my death sentence was brought to me. With calm I have received it, calmly will the bullet strike me." 30 Schlageter did not go as a lamb to the slaughter but with his eyes blazing, as suggested by the following description that found its way into numerous textbooks. "A stake is rammed into the ground. He must kneel before it. Never! Then a French sergeant bends his knees from behind and binds him to [the stake]. Schlageter strains to raise himself up. At the same moment a salvo cracks. Thus falls the 'first soldier of the Third Reich,' establishing the long line of blood-witnesses of our people for their freedom."31 The script was perfect for Nazi purposes: laden with drama, sacrifice, and heartrending sentimental classic irrational act.

The unrestrained language and the continuous adulation found in

the descriptions of the triumphs of Hitler's foreign policy reached a shrillness unprecedented even for Nazi writers. The constantly accelerating momentum pushed the reader headlong into a state of mind in which restraint and objectivity were lost. Such impassioned rhetoric made the impending war seem both inevitable and necessary, if only to sate the thirst for action. Even against his better judgment, the reader was swept along, as if the invisible stream of history propelled him irresistibly toward (and ultimately over) the edge of Niagara.

The catalysts for Hitler's foreign policy moves were the alleged mistreatment of Germany after World War I and the persecution of German minorities by neighboring regimes. The drama that surrounded the annexation of Austria was heightened when the Fuehrer loudly proclaimed it his historic mission to restore his homeland to its proper place in the German Reich. A *Klasse-I* textbook related: "When the Fuehrer was in Obersalzberg, there came to him mothers and wives and sisters of the men who were tormented in prisons. . . . [Austrian Nazis jailed for disruptive behavior] With tears in their

eyes," the women begged: "Fuehrer, help us! It is almost intolerable!" In such a situation, Hitler was often described as a modern Atlas shouldering his heavy global burden: "How frightfully difficult it must have been for him that he could not help now" because Germany "was not yet strong enough. . . . And they trusted him: Have patience: you must still wait and hold out! [watch and pray]." The authors did not permit the momentum to subside; they shifted gears and rapidly forced the narrative along to its conclusion: "Then came the order: forward! The marching feet of the columns boomed on the bridges of the Inn; the guns rattled past the border posts. Now came the first city. How would it be? The soldiers did not turn their eyes. Then the Austrians stood on the streets; men, women, and children cried and rejoiced and placed flowers in the guns and cannons and flowers on the harnesses of the horses: 'Finally, finally you are here! How we have waited for you! Finally, you are here!'" The jubilation continued as Hitler made his entry into his homeland: "The Fuehrer comes to us. The Fuehrer himself brings us into the Reich. All the distress of the difficult year was forgotten. Now slowly Adolf Hitler came forward up the streets, so the people pressed to his car in their happiness. In the evening he was in Linz, where he had gone to school. Incessantly, the cry arose: 'One Folk, One Reich, One Fuehrer! . . . Never was a kaiser received in Vienna in such jubilation as he.'" 32

The cheering barely subsided before another march of triumph began: in Czechoslovakia. The textbook writers made skillful use of the Sudeten crisis of 1938 to demonstrate Hitler's genius. The children were told that their leader was unmoved by Czech cries for war and the threats of England and France. "The Fuehrer

remains calm and determined and prepares everything for the march into Bohemia. Then England and France give in; they consider themselves still not strong enough to fight."

When the Czech frontier was breached by the German columns in October 1938, the texts described a scene even more gripping than the one encountered in Austria: "Flowers upon flowers greeted the liberators. . . . But many could not shout nor laugh; they stood silent on the streets and cried, so frightful had been the distress of the recent times. They must first learn to laugh again."³³

The account in *Ewige Strasse* described the suffering of the Sudeten German minority in heartrending detail: "Indeed, beneath tears of joy Hitler perceived dreadful marks of suffering: pained expressions, sad mothers' eyes, emaciated little arms of children, collapsed houses and villages told of the hunger and suffering. Immediately, the Fuehrer ordered once again the assistance of the entire German people to secure work, bread, and emotional well-being for these

sorely tested *Volksgenossen*." 34

The outbreak of the war in Poland presented a serious problem for the textbook writers. A number of them used the war as an opportunity to summarize the Fuehrer's achievements, which not only left readers impressed but additionally diverted them from Hitler's personal responsibility for initiating the war. From *Geschichtsbuch-1*: "Blow for blow, in breathtaking speed Adolf Hitler had freed and united one German folk group after another with the GreaterGerman folk." One question remained: Poland. "Many German cities and villages with millions of German people had been delivered up to the Polish state by the Versailles Treaty. . . . The Germans in Poland were even more frightfully treated than in the Czech state. The Poles took their land away; they chased them across the border; they compelled the German children to attend Polish schools."35

Even after the long train of adulation, the authors apparently felt compelled to give some explanation for the outbreak of hostilities. The children were told that the Polish state gave the frightful order to slaughter all of the German nationals "who for twenty years had lived under them. . . . And the Poles joyfully carried out their orders." The writers reported that sixty thousand Germans were murdered. Furthermore, the Poles "shot at German aircraft; they shot across the German border; they tortured the Germans in Poland in a frightful way. And England incited the Poles continuously. Finally, the patience of the Fuehrer reached its end. He ordered: 'From September 1, 1939, on we are returning the fire.'"36 No mention was made of the pact with Stalin.

In quickly shifting to a less disconcerting topic the Fuehrer's vast

achievements the authors betrayed a certain uneasiness. The sentence, "Finally, the patience of the Fuehrer reached its end," was a lame excuse for unleashing the *Blitzkrieg* over an entire continent. After being victimized by the Poles, the armies of Greater-Germany were suddenly in possession of practically the whole of Europe and North Africa. Nevertheless, narratives of great deeds made more exciting reading than probing analyses of war's causes. From the start, the successes of German arms afforded many opportunities to sing the praises of German martial glory: "Again the Fuehrer is in the midst of [his soldiers]. He has created the new German army; he has given it its weapons, the best in the world, the tanks, the aircraft, the war plan with which the Poles were now beaten down, and now as supreme leader of the Armed Forces he was also the one who carried out the plan."³⁷

If German students harbored any reservations about the wisdom of their government's course of action, the history textbooks strove to bury such thoughts under the flood of overblown verbiage. "Never

had the German people been so united as now. And it was never stronger than now. . . . We knew whom to thank." There were continual assertions of faith in the Fuehrer. "The homeland looks to Adolf Hitler in this war, the Armed Forces look to him as their leader, and army and homeland are one, unbreakably one."

Speaking in a less than subtle religious vein, these same authors advised: "If one feels himself weak, then he should concentrate on the Fuehrer to gain strength. . . . Young boy and young girl, to you the great, new German Reich is transmitted; you are growing up in this Reich. It is not presented to you [as a gift]. You must preserve this Reich in purity and justice, in unity and strength." In what resembled a religious admonition, the youth were told, "Think always on him, who has created [the Reich]! Then will it endure eternally. Greater-Germany, Our Reich!" 38

The concluding sentences of most textbooks lifted the student in a crescendo of reverence: "Adolf Hitler has guided us to the threshold of a great epoch. We thank him for it, as we grow to be worthy of this epoch. Fuehrer, We Thank You"³⁹ The authors of *Volk und Reich der Deutschen (Klasse-5)* concluded: "The entire German folk, uniformly inspired, stands in thankfulness and devotion to their Fuehrer, who obliterated the shame of Compiègne, who burst the shackles of Versailles and made the way free for Greater-Germany's Future"⁴⁰

The Earliest Germans: The Happy Accident of Nature

The textbooks must begin with a description of the primitive period of Central Europe (the Ice Age) and show how certain races (Neanderthal, Aurignac, Cromagnon) were the bearers of peculiar cultures.

The Nazi authors' treatment of the early Germanic period is significant in a discussion of the design of textbooks because their manipulation of sources for this epoch was unparalleled. The lively rhythm of the Nazi histories was not slowed by their coverage of the usually dull prehistoric period. Even the illustrated materials relating to the German tribesmen were consciously designed to add a romantic aura reminiscent of the American Old West to an otherwise dry-as-dust recital of anthropological findings.

Dealing with a period for which documentation was either scarce or nonexistent, writers took unheard-of liberties to accomplish the stated aim of carrying away the heart of the student. The suggestions given in the *Zentralblatt für gesamte Unterrichts-Verwaltung in Preussia* (Publication for general instructional administration in Prussia) on August 5, 1933, called for an emphasis upon the primitive period

to demonstrate that "certain races (Neanderthal, Aurignac, Cro-Magnon) were the bearers of peculiar cultures" and that even in this primitive period, culture was "a creation of the race." It must be demonstrated, according to the directive, that "the history of Europe is the work of the peoples of the Nordic race. 41

Hitler did not share the compulsion of many of the leading Nazis for dramatizing the early Germanic period, although, for once, the Fuehrer's opinion was ignored by those preparing the textbooks. Hitler perceived the difficulty of establishing the idea of a master race while at the same time acknowledging the backwardness of one's ancestors:

Why do we force the whole world to know that we have no past? As if it were not enough that the Romans were already constructing great edifices while our ancestors were still living in clay huts, Himmler is now starting to dig up those clay villages and becomes enthusiastic about every clay potsherd and every stone axe he finds. The only thing this proves is that we still threw stone hatchets and squatted by open fires at a time when Greece and Rome had reached the highest cultural level. We really have every reason to be quiet about that age.42

In spite of Hitler's skepticism, the textbooks reported that recent research proved "how clever and hardworking our forefathers were, how alive German soil became in the changing times of men, plants and animals."43

Maintaining the myth of blood purity while recounting the movements of various primitive groups across Germany caused considerable difficulty. The crude Neanderthal man was the prime embarrassment. Lest there be any inclination on the part of German

students to assume kinship with such a creature, the writer of one text boldly headed a subchapter: "We Did Not Stem from the Neanderthal." As proof, he asserted the dissimilarity between the Neanderthal and modern Europeans: "The Neanderthal hardly resembles contemporary Europeans. He was smaller and walked less upright. . . . On the flat forehead of his massive head sat thick bony bulges over deep eye sockets. . . . The mouth resembled a snout."⁴⁴

The authors of *Ewige Strasse* insisted that the descendants of the Neanderthal were not found in Europe, vaguely suggesting that they "went south" after the return of cold weather. "Whoever wished to survive in the cold and severe times had to be harder, bolder and cleverer than this Neanderthal race."⁴⁵ The authors of a *Klasse-6* text (*Volk und Fuehrer*) speculated similarly that the Neanderthal "retreated gradually toward the south, where he found protection

from the raging ice storms in wind-protected caves." Such musings became increasingly fanciful as the imaginations of the Nazi authors wandered unchecked. "Perhaps [the Neanderthal] is a relative of the large African animal kingdom [or] perhaps he is extinct." A *Klasse-2* text in the same series, however, admitted that "nothing is known about the fate of the Neanderthal." 46

The emergence of the Nordic race during the Ice Age was recounted as a happy accident of nature, although the readers were left in doubt about whether there was anything providential in the accident. On one matter there was no doubt: the Nordics were not pampered. A remote, heartless deity purified the genetic strain of his chosen people in a manner that brutally disregarded their creature comforts but left them marvelously equipped to prevail against other, less chastened species of humanity. "The ice in the north and south enclosed a small area in the midst of our fatherland which was icefree," creating a frigid racial incubator in a land of savage ice and snowstorms.⁴⁷

One text proudly proclaimed the Nordics the "children of ice." The lesson was clear: superior beings evolved not in hot but in cold climates. "Not in tropical heat but in the rigor of the ice age men were formed." A clear warning was also issued: the Germans have "always gone under" when they avoided adversity.⁴⁸ "Two distinct but similarly able human types survived those hard and inhospitable times of cold and ice": the *Lössmenschen* and the *Renntierjäger*. They were long-headed with high foreheads and were "already accomplished artists." In physique and structure of limbs they were "neither delicate nor plump, but broad and

powerful. The nobly formed face had high forehead and strong chin."⁴⁹

A kindred group, the *Fälische*, intermingled with these two groups, producing the *Nordleute* (Nordics). The *Fälische* were described as "large-framed," as well as "the most committed to the soil and the most tenacious people among the Indo-Europeans." The *Nordleute* were descended from these rugged prehistoric men of "beautiful body build, light complexion . . . fair hair and eyes." "It is certain that in the previous time of frost and snowstorms, winds and inundation all weaklings were annihilated [although no evidence was given]. Only the healthiest and most skillful men had been able to survive this time of emergency." Thus the contemporary Germanic chosen people came into being as a result of the Darwinian process of natural selection: nature "had selected them and in this manner built up a cleverer and more resourceful human species."⁵⁰

The illustrations that accompanied *Ewige Strasse* were remarkable for the impressions they sought to convey to the reader. Nordics were always sketched as tall, blond, muscular, handsome, and im-

peccably clean: ("Soap is a German discovery," claimed another Nazi textbook. 51) A clever student might have observed that none of the figures representing his ancestors resembled his present leaders. None was as fat as Goering, as short as Goebbels, as dark as Hess, or as weak in appearance as Adolf Hitler. The scenes illustrating the Germanic migrations showed caravans of covered wagons fording treacherous streams or assembling in a circle for protection. With the exception of the spears and the round shields carried by the horsemen, such scenes could easily have been drawn from the American West. Indeed, the parallels are too obvious to have been accidental and undoubtedly were part of the plan to "carry away the hearts" of students in the manner suggested in the Prussian directive of 1933.⁵² The sagas described endless days spent marching through "native and foreign territory . . . woods and plain, inhabited and uninhabited regions, through ice and snowstorms, heat and drought."⁵³

The Nazis offered an interesting but unoriginal justification for the early Nordics' conquest of other lands. "They found arable lands in the hands of incapable people, so they took possession of it"; that is, the previous owners were not doing anything constructive with the land. (This frank admission of their true motives was unusual for the Nazis, although the American colonists employed a similar rationale for their seizure of the Indian lands.) Still, the conquered peoples should not have despaired, according to the Nazi accounts, because "the subjugated peoples experienced under the *Nordleute* the blessings of Nordic work and Nordic efficiency."⁵⁴ (Again, echoes of the "White Man's Burden," only slightly modified.)

Sturdy Nordic peasants were shown tilling the soil and forging

iron; the writers insisted that the Nordic peoples invented the plow, the wagon, and the drill machine. They also attributed great significance to the "superior square dwellings" of the Nordics and denigrated the round huts of inferior primitive groups: "The Nordic peasant invented a better type of house and obtained for it a solid material." The latter included stone underpinning for the "long house," which accommodated itself to possible lengthening. "The *Nordleute* liked to add on a forehall."⁵⁵ The authors of *Ewige Strasse* insisted that "superior Germanic swords" were sold in the Roman world and that a "Nordic *Rennwagen*" (racing wagon) the "oldest completely preserved wagon" in the world was discovered in an Egyptian king's tomb. Nordics also constructed "the oldest preserved sea craft in the world." . . . "The Alsen boat is 14m long, 2m wide and about 60cm deep. . . . The Alsen boat was entirely made out of wood, without any use of metal. Such rudder boats were independent of wind. But sailboats also were built and used by the

Germanen." 56

So strong was the racial feeling among the early Germans that "the child of a free man and an unfree woman [concubine] was unfree," whereas a "bastard" child, "the illegitimate child of a free woman and a free man, could rise to the highest positions."⁵⁷

The textbooks portrayed the millennium between 1800 B.C. and 800 B.C. as the Golden Age of German prehistory because "artistic tools and weapons, refined habits and customs already distinguished the Germanic *Adelbauer* [noble peasant] as the descendant of the Nordic *Wehrbauer* [armed peasant]." Their long houses and spacious halls included beautifully carved posts and a special seat for the lord of the house. Germanic bronze forgers were so skillful and well-known that their wares were purchased from "far and near."⁵⁸

The Nazi authors strove to convince their readers that Germanic superiority was a longstanding tradition stretching back to the threshold of civilization. Their finished product, especially as it related to the earliest period, can be called "history" only in the loosest definition of the term. Their "histories" bear a closer resemblance to romantic fantasies whose connections with reality are tenuous or indeterminable at best.

The National Socialist Interpretation of History

. . . it is the task of the folkish state to see to it that a world history is finally written in which the racial question is raised to a dominant position.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The educational significance of an interpretation of history lies in

its power to shape the contours of the mind, thus affecting how students apprehend both subject matter and life experiences. Hitler was fascinated by history, and his interpretation of the past powerfully influenced his actions and view of reality. Perceiving himself as no mere antiquarian, Hitler desired to "grasp and understand the meaning of history." As an educational tool, history became in his scheme a kind of divining rod that led Germans to "the forces which caused those effects which we later face as historical events."⁵⁹ More important, the programmatic thinker had to possess the historian's grasp of the past.

Race was decisive in the realm of history because of the manner in which peoples apprehended, assimilated, and preserved knowledge. And because he saw culture as a racial creation, Hitler's view of history could be called ethnic-biological, as opposed to the Marxist view, which was social-economic. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler stated that a people that received its culture from other races "could never be called culture-creating." National Socialists subdivided the human

races into three categories: culture-creators, culture-bearers, and culture-destroyers. Germanic culture-creators combined "Greek spirit plus Germanic technology," according to Hitler. The Japanese were culture-bearers, and the Jews were culture-destroyers. 60 Walter Gross, a leading National Socialist educational theorist, listed the paramount cause of the decline of civilization as numerical decline, a shift in a people's perception of its worth, and the mixing of a people's blood with that of racial inferiors:

We know that the ancient peoples who were once mightily on this earth and who then declined at no time succumbed because of economic or political catastrophes as such. No group on earth ever went under because it lost a war, experienced a crop failure or was required to go through an economic or political catastrophe. But peoples continually go under the moment when the blood value of their national, historical, political, and economic life for the people themselves is exhausted. 61

It was difficult for the Nazis to synchronize their biological theory of history with their equally fanatical insistence that the decisive factors in the outcome of history were "the value of a people, the personality value, and drive for self-preservation." 62 These factors were considered molding functions, requiring the intervention of the educational system. All of the Nazis' most cherished values—nationalism, heroism, militarism, and the Fuehrer principle—required molding. The negative values—internationalism, democracy, and pacifism—demanded constant vigilance to avoid their poisonous effects. The Jew was consistently identified as the carrier of these negative values.

The tendency of Germans to wander was given a prominent place in the Nazis' interpretation of their own history. The Germanic

migrations were both lauded as evidence of the dynamism of their race and condemned as a cause of the decline of Germanic creativeness. Beginning about 2500 B.C., these migrations took Nordic peoples into the Caucasus, Italy, Greece, Iran, India, and other locations. Calling themselves *Arier* (Aryans) or *Herren* (Masters), they established enduring civilizations in these areas. In the presence of racially inferior peoples, the power of the Nordics prevailed in the Near East as well as in Europe. The *Iraner* (Aryans) in present-day Iran established "a proud world empire," as did the Greeks, who "made themselves for all time famous through their heroes and artists." And the Romans were so efficient at war and clever in government that they converted Europe, Asia, and Africa into a Mediterranean empire. The migrants fared better than the "loyal and

true *Wehrbauer*," who remained near the hereditary hearth and fields. Their day had not yet come: "We Germans are offspring of the *Germanen*, who remained in the Nordic homeland as the purest descendants of the *Nordleute*, in order to preserve until today the blood and soil of the ancestors." 63 Settling in present-day Thuringia and lower Saxony, the *Nordleute*, according to the Nazi historians, passed on the best and purest blood to their descendants, whose neighbors called them *Germanen*.

While the migrating *Nordleute*, yielding to the glitter and ease of life in the warmer climates, intermarried with foreign races, the *Germanen* steadfastly preserved their racial purity. The textbook writers resorted to a paradoxical explanation to account for German cultural backwardness at the time when their kinsmen, who had been lured to more exotic environs, enjoyed considerably more prominence: "In contrast to the Greeks and Romans, the *Urgermanen* [original Germans] established for the time being no political system. They did not need it because their tribes were strong enough to defend the homeland successfully and to win new crop lands." The readers must have wondered why their ancestors should have been content simply to "round out their borders" while the Latins made the Mediterranean a Roman lake.⁶⁴ No explanation was given for this suspension of the *Fuehrerprinzip*.

Stoutly maintaining that the ancient Greeks spawned an Aryan civilization, the Nazi writers drew the sharpest possible contrast between the Greek invaders and the original inhabitants of Asia Minor. "Henceforth there stood two classes precipitously opposite one another: the Nordic master class of free men, in whose hands lay the entire landed property, and the original inhabitants who

were laborers or slaves without rights." The Nordic Greeks sustained a high degree of racial consciousness for an extended period, but the Spartans, "as no other people in Hellas," protected the purity of their blood by forbidding marriages with subject peoples. Commercial professions were forbidden the Spartans in order that "the most valuable men could be free entirely for collective life and for fighting."⁶⁵ The youth were taught only to read and to write and to prevail in war. The laconic brevity of Spartan education fascinated the Nazi authors, who viewed Spartan pedagogical techniques with approval and cited the following simple dialogue between teacher and pupil:

Why are our swords short?

Because we love to be near the enemy.

Why has Sparta no walls?

Our bodies are its walls.⁶⁶

But, alas, the civilization of the Greeks expired "because they violated a pitiless law of nature, the law of race." One textbook compared the decline of nations with the degeneration of various "groups of living things" in the "kingdom of nature" (horses, dogs, apple trees) that were careless with the disposition of their genes.

67

The Romans were held up to German youth as a prime example of a Nordic people whose fate was sealed when they strayed from the straight and narrow racial path. Their three epic struggles with Carthage were portrayed as collisions between Aryans (Romans) and Semites. "The enemy was called *Punier*. They were not Aryan but Semites related to the Jews."⁶⁸ This war of necessity was forced on Aryan Rome by the Carthaginian exploiters, who challenged Rome's economy and freedom of the seas. Such accounts plainly conjured up images of the World War II contest between Germany and the modern-day spiritual Carthage: England.

As the Roman state continuously burgeoned, the people unfortunately surrendered their birthright: their racial purity. "Only the statesmen and military commanders stemmed from the old Nordic patrician stock," and, despite the excellent performance of the Roman armies under such leaders, "the great state finally declined because its people intermarried and the healthy Nordic peasant and leadership stock went under in the life of the great state."⁶⁹

Rome's demise was all the more depressing because it was the Romans' more vigorous cousins to the north who ultimately defeated them. Upon confronting these fierce warriors, the Romans felt a combination of fear, envy, and grudging admiration. They

"marveled at the powerful limbs, the fair skin, the reddish hair and the defiant blue-gray eyes of the men and women out of the north." They also lauded the Germanic bravery and loyalty. Because the Greeks and Romans admired their "pure-blooded beauty," the Nazi historians reported that they "cast the image of the people from the north in their stone and bronze works."⁷⁰

The famous Battle of Teutoberger Forest (A.D. 9) resulted in the defeat of the Roman legions and guaranteed the continued protection of Germans from the *fremvolk* (alien peoples): "Thus 25,000 Roman professional soldiers were defeated by 6,000 German peasant warriors, and a young German commander vanquished an experienced Roman field marshal in spite of superiority many times over during a cleverly planned battle of annihilation." In the annals of Nazi history, Teutoberger Forest assumed the proportions of an apocalyptic event. The victory precluded the Romanization of the fatherland and spared it the fate of Gaul to the West. "Thus for the future, Germany preserved the pure blood of the *Germanen*. The fate of our people was decided for millennia."⁷¹

To impress on their readers the stigma of racial mixing, German textbooks told of one Nordic tribe, the *Bastarnen*, in the area "west of the Black Sea," which intermarried with an "eastern people." Their offspring were dubbed "Bastards." 72

In the centuries following the Germanic conquest of Rome, the Frankish Kingdom towered over Europe, but poor leadership by Karl the Great's successors allowed a pure Germanic empire to fall into ruin. Even the pure-blooded were not immune to such a fate. Therefore, in the coverage of the Middle Ages, another dominant theme appeared in the history written by the Nazis: poor leadership and its appendage, disunity. Ludwig the Pious, Karl's weak and ineffectual successor, "was incapable of defending the Reich against the Wenden and the Hungarians." A pure-blooded ruler could be inept, according to the account given in *So Ward Das Reich*, especially if his plight was the result of bad influences: "Ludwig was completely under the influence of his spiritual adviser. But he hated everything that was German. Jews streamed in hordes into the Reich. Ludwig allowed himself to be persuaded by the priests to extinguish all memory of the Great Germanic period." The Reich thus suffered the worst fate that could befall a racially pure people: conquest by its ethnic inferiors. "Where there is no leader, there is also no unity, no order, no power."73

Leaderless racial elites could fall under the domination of inferior racial groups, who presumably possessed superior leaders. But it was never made clear by what mechanism good leaders emerged from the ranks of the racially impure. The assumption had always been that superior leaders arose only out of an advanced racial milieu.

The Vikings appeared on the scene of world history with electrifying suddenness. The "third wave of Nordic blood over Europe," they were unsullied by foreign influences and were the seagoing counterparts of the land-fighting Germanic peasants to the south. Young, virile peasants from Scandinavia embarked upon sea voyages "either to seek new land or to prove themselves . . . before they took over the family farm."⁷⁴ German students, hitherto drilled in the sacred myth of *Blut und Boden*, were now assured that Scandinavians had been from the earliest times equally proficient as peasants, warriors, and seamen. In the nautical realm they made a number of remarkable discoveries (the islands off Norway in 870, Iceland in 875, and Greenland and North America around 1000). The Viking prowess in war was extolled: "The Nordics established their states in hard fights; namely, they were masters in sea warfare. They rammed the ships of the enemy with *Ramsparn*, boarded them with iron hooks, and fought hand-to-hand with ax and sword. In the absence of victory, the mortally wounded Vikings hurled themselves

on the fire of their own ship in order to go under honorably. To slain comrades the bold warriors inscribed simple gravestones." 75

The First German Reich experienced one last epoch of glory in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries because German leadership was decisive, in the judgment of the Nazi writers. Heinrich I (919-936) perceived two difficult tasks before him. "He wanted to combine all of the German tribes into one 'Volk and Reich,' and he wanted to secure that new Reich before all foreign foes." Heinrich succeeded in this undertaking, which no previous German leader had accomplished, and all of Germany followed the call of this "mystical leader."76

The fate of the First German Reich, claimed the Nazi authors, depended upon the characteristics of its rulers and the rulers' faithfulness to their covenant. Reading the chronicle of this period reminds one, ironically, of the struggles of the ancient Israelites, another chosen people whose fate hinged on the kings' adherence to divine will.

Heinrich I was followed by foolish rulers. Otto I (936-973) arranged a marriage between his son and the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, committing a transgression that "avenged itself only too soon." By the time of Otto III (983-1002), the proud work of the Reich's founder was undone. The "sins of the fathers" had been visited upon the "children and their children's children."77

The ebb and flow of German political life continued. "The fortunes rose again with Konrad II [1024-1039], a happy choice, for Konrad was a man whom Germany needed . . . the picture of a Germanic folk Fuehrer."78 A true hero, Konrad recognized the real enemies

of the German people: the princes, the bishops, and, above all, the Roman church.

When the empire fell victim to division and decay, the memory of its glory lived on and created a powerful longing within its people. One manifestation of this longing was found in the legend that Frederick Barbarossa, who died on the Third Crusade, would someday ride forth again: "Thus Frederick Barbarossa rests now, the great Stauffer Kaiser, after a life filled with struggle in a hot, foreign land. But in Germany it is told that he sits with his men in Kaiser Mountain in the Kyffhauser, and dreams there and waits, until the ravens no longer circle the mountain. Then the old Kaiser will again ride through Germany and restore the Reich."⁷⁹

Like that other chosen race Israel the Germans yearned for a messiah to bring them out of their woeful plight. A constant refrain appeared in the textbooks: "When will the deliverer come to this land?" Their exasperation intensified when other united European states partitioned the world during this period but their own im-

potence precluded German participation. "While the world was partitioned, Germany lay disunified and splintered under foot. Even the first German commercial colony of Venezuela could be held only a few years. History passes by a powerless people; only the strong get assistance from it." 80

At this point in the narrative, the writers of *So Ward Das Reich* could not resist the temptation to jerk the student out of the sixteenth-century milieu and remind him that the German people had risen to a position of power: "Today Adolf Hitler fights for Germany's portion of the world! "81 Via the endless maze of confusing and inconsequential happenings, the plot of his country's history had been revealed, and along the way the student was frequently reminded that the climax of that drama was contemporaneous with his own life.

The Hero in History

Our history is the history of great men, but at the same time the history of the most severe struggles between the self-will of the strongest individuals and the law of the totality, between the I and the We. No other people has made it so difficult on its leaders as the Germans.

Geschichtsbuch-6

The attempt to unify a land essentially without design, whose states lacked common characteristics, has certainly been one of the central themes of German history. Generations of German writers strove in vain to locate some nexus in their nation's historical development around which to weld a national consciousness. Centrifugal forces produced by the geographical features of the land and the particularistic tendencies of the German people, however, frustrated all efforts at unification. Many Germans

concluded that only a leader of unbreakable determination could form such a people into a nation. A deafening clamor arose in the years before Hitler's seizure of power for a Fuehrer a world-historical individual to put an end to the dissension.

The Germans' lack of toleration for divergent opinions seemed to be in direct proportion to the intensity and depth of feelings dividing the various categories of the population. For ending this division, Hitler had an infallible solution: the *Fuehrerprinzip* (leadership principle), which occupied the apex of an "iron triangle" (*Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Fuehrer*) into which all Germans were to be herded.

The unresolved contradictions in the *Fuehrerprinzip* have never been fully exposed by scholars. Perhaps the inconsistencies are most evident in educational theory. It was never clear in the writings of

leading educational theorists, for example, whether the schools were to develop leaders or simply to identify them; that is, whether superior training produced leaders or whether leaders emerged spontaneously as a consequence of inherited characteristics. The notion of the spontaneous selection of leaders won Hitler's endorsement in a 1935 speech in Nuremberg: "In the National Socialist state the elite principle goes further than mere training for political leadership. It is based on the theory that a chosen group arises spontaneously through the process of natural selection. Every profession chooses its membership according to talent." One did not choose a career or a leadership position because, in Hitler's words, the task attracted, as if by magnetic force, "precisely those individuals who have aptitude for the discharge of its functions." 82 But the logic of Hitler's statement, suggesting that schools simply provided an arena in which leaders selected themselves, contradicted other pronouncements that he made demanding that the schools mold leaders.

Hans Schemm, author of a major work on National Socialist educational theory, also favored the emergent thesis. He mentioned Schiller, Goethe, and Schopenhauer as examples of leaders who "emerge from the multitude" to "write books and donate these books to the nation." "Another donates to the people compositions Wagner, Mozart, Beethovena third technical discoveries, a fourth paintings Dürer, Rubens." According to Schemm, "Fuehrer personalities" would not have sprung from the multitude had the collective folk not possessed the superior traits to deserve such leaders. A Goethe appearing in the midst of an uncivilized people, such as African Negroes, would find his genius ignored and his works totally incomprehensible to his peers.

Goethe was not a mere "gift of heaven" to the Germans but a "magnificent proof of the quality of the collective German folk, that precisely this Goethe had come about."⁸³

Schemm assured his readers that in time the German people would bring forth "new Schillers, Goethes, Schopenhauers, Nietzsches, Wagners, Beethovens and Mozarts." A curious omission was his failure to anticipate new Hitlers. Perhaps the Fuehrer was formed out of the primordial essence: perhaps he was the one unique leader.

The emergent leader thesis ignored a question constantly faced by textbook writers: how inferior peoples generated superior leaders. According to the logic of the Nazis' arguments, they apparently deserved them. The history textbooks often stood in opposition to the theory that high-quality leaders issued spontaneously from a superior racial milieu. More frequently the authors attributed the caliber of leadership either to accident or in rare cases to the blessings of Providence. The appearance of Adolf Hitler in the Reich in 1919 was interpreted as a "godsend."⁸⁴

In any case, the intellectual giants mentioned by Schemm received scant coverage in the histories. Rather than discuss Nietzsche, Goethe, and Beethoven, the textbooks dwelt upon the likes of Horst Wessel and Herbert Norkus, petty heroes whose status more closely accommodated the adolescent frame of Nazi models. Furthermore, the Nazi histories invariably clad these heroes in brown or field gray, and the pungent fumes of battle were never far from their nostrils.

Nazi historians had to explain the long intervals when outstanding German leaders were lacking. A number of expedients were employed to avoid embarrassing their race-sensitized readers. One favorite strategy was to reduce to insignificance non-German contributions to history; another was to ignore them outright. Amusing parallel histories could be written containing only the important material omitted by the Nazi authors. A third tactic claiming German credit for the achievements of foreign peoples contradicted two favorite Nazi dogmas: that intermarriage and ideological cross-fertilization led to decay and that removing oneself from the sacred German *Boden* was followed by a loss of racial consciousness.

Nazi historians claimed the glory and ignored the contradictions. Germans in America were credited with raising the cultural level of the English-American nationality, even while the Germans themselves were losing their Aryan creativity.⁸⁵ The Nazi attempts to claim German credit for foreign leaders were often as ludicrous as the following explanation for Napoleon Bonaparte's greatness: "Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica. His forebears stemmed from upper Italy and carried in the early days

Germanic surnames."⁸⁶ Another book contained a strange reference to Abraham Lincoln, claiming he had a grandfather with the Germanic name of *Linkhorn*. The same writer gave German settlers in America credit for raising the first protest against human slavery and said Germans were responsible for the Union victory in the Civil War as well as for developing the first paper mill, the first ironworks, and the first skyscrapers.⁸⁷

The Nazis sought through the schools to rectify the frailties of their history by molding suitable leaders, although they recognized that intervening factors could upset these plans. The ironclad certainty of the superiority of their race contrasted sharply with their concern for the fickleness of history. One textbook claimed peculiar prophetic insight for the German mythological tale that related how Hodur, the blind god, unintentionally slew Baldur with a twig of mistletoe given him by Loki. The authors of the text complained that "in every German springtime" some "imbecile, idiotic man" made his appearance, like Hodur, to slay the fatherland's hopes.⁸⁸

Hitler and Otto von Bismarck were prime examples of historical

leaders with heroic will. Many unspoken parallels were drawn between the Nazi Fuehrer and the Iron Chancellor, although great care was taken to record the human frailties of Bismarck. Both men employed almost superhuman measures to satisfy the deepest yearnings of Germans for deliverance, thus qualifying them as world-historical individuals in the best Hegelian tradition.

Bismarck cut the Gordian knot, which from time immemorial had frustrated German unification. The following account was typical of those contained in Nazi textbooks:

Germany was divided and torn asunder for centuries. There was no German Reich; there were only Bavaria, Prussia, and Saxony, Austria, Württemberg and many other provinces, and each province had its own prince and went its own way. During that period foreigners did not find it difficult to bend Germany under their domination, to play one German province against another and to plunder the German borderlands for themselves. Should that never be otherwise? Indeed, if only a man would come, who with hard fist would force together in unity all of the discordant parts and for the Germans finally create the Reich! 89

Even a statesman as great as Bismarck served as a lightning rod to draw criticisms away from the Nazi regime. Vicious anti-Nazi rumors whispered privately by Germans could not be repeated, even when the purpose was to refute them, but textbooks gave full vent to Bismarck's critics, knowing that students would recall hearing similar denunciations of the Fuehrer's policies. The authors then arranged their narrative to neutralize the hostile criticism and skepticism.

Bismarck and Hitler came to power under somewhat similar

circumstances: both were appointed by elder statesmen (Wilhelm I and Hindenburg), and both proceeded to implement controversial policies in the face of vitriolic opposition. In justifying Hitler's dictatorship, one author certainly had Bismarck's famous "blood and iron" speech in mind: "The folkish Fuehrer-Reich revived through the conviction that the true will of the people did not come through parliamentary votes and resolutions."⁹⁰

The following account of Bismarck's appointment proved very useful to the Nazis: "As soon as the news of the replacement reached the cities and villages, all Prussia was deeply incensed. 'What,' it was said, 'this mad Junker wants to govern the land?' Because he knew his own mind Bismarck ignored the outcry. He knew already at that time that German unity could only be wrung from the

Habsburgs by force of arms." 91 To his detractors Bismarck answered: "For my part I unhesitatingly go the way which I recognize in the interests of the fatherland to be the right thing, unwavering until the end; whether I reap hate or love for it that is to me of no concern." When the king's courage waned, Bismarck's relentless determination "put steel in his spine" once again. Nothing could dissuade the Iron Chancellor from his course once he had grasped the helm. Perhaps the following account contains the most vivid picture of Bismarck as a dominating figure: "Until deep in the night he worked, in unheard-of tempo; 'everything must go in a gallop,' a colleague reported. . . . 'Often he was tired, dead tired.' But devotion to duty and devotion to his staff held him continually upright."92

At the outset of the decisive war with Austria, Bismarck's detractors again roared their protests: "This insanity," they raged. "War against the Austrian kinsmen at a time when all of Germany cries for unity." They labeled Bismarck a "fool," an "adventurer," a "rascal."93 (Were the same harsh words secretly being said or thought about Hitler's war? If so, the faintheartedness of such criticisms must be exposed.) "Blow by blow the victory was won over the Habsburgs and their allies." . . . "Now he was the hero, the master, which everyone understood. Hurrah! Hurrah! the cry arose to him on his return to Berlin."94 (Were the writers suggesting that after the victory, the people would cheer Hitler also?)

Bismarck's superhuman capacity for work on behalf of the Reich was praised, but the writers were careful not to let him outshine their own Fuehrer. "Many times this giant was overcome by a need for rest, for the superhuman work diminished his strength."95

(Hitler never got tired.) "As no one else he was by nature through his genius and his willpower set aside to lead." Although often physically overcome by his labors, "a superhuman will worked in him and compelled the body to its limits in his service."⁹⁶

Even Bismarck's achievements could not free the racially pure Germans from their dependence upon such factors as the fickleness of human personality. After the death of the old Kaiser, Bismarck's work was undone by the brash young Wilhelm II. (Hodur had slain Baldur once again.) On his deathbed, as his life ebbed away, the aged Bismarck called out: "*Ach, Deutschland, Deutschland, Deutschland!*"⁹⁷ Even as the fever reduced the former Iron Chancellor to a lifeless corpse, Germany's destiny once again was foiled by weaklings. The textbooks reproached the timid Reichstag leadership, the government's dependence upon fickle majorities, and the divisiveness of elections. But above all, they lamented the passing of the dominating personality whose presence and power of will made their

peculiarly ambivalent population work together. 98

The ease with which weak personalities could alter the course of history provoked among the Nazis the most extreme apprehension and uncertainty. The effects of a change of leadership were for them startling: "Bismarck dominated the politics of the Reich through his genius, his knowledge of men, circumstances and arrangements of power and his colossal capacity for work, which knew no regard for his own person." Wilhelm II, however, "wished to govern by himself." And although he had "near at hand the best wills to accomplish the German people's blessing . . . the qualities failed him which had served Bismarck."99

Ultimately, war, not school, served as the selection agency for leaders in National Socialist Germany. More accurately, war was the school for leadership. Certainly education was not complete without the tempering of character which military life provided. The Nazi histories made it clear that bookish training had been inadequate in the past. In Wilhelmian Germany the barracks teemed with manhood, but Germany nevertheless prosecuted the World War "politically leaderless, torn asunder by party strife and . . . continually worn down by the emergency of the blockade."100

The trauma of the trenches tempered a future generation of true leaders, who emerged during the World War and who fought for Germany's regeneration afterward as political soldiers. Germany's collapse in 1918 caused a sharp break in the military's traditional role as a disinterested party to politics. Because of his efforts to fill the wartime political vacuum, General Erich Ludendorff became a favorite hero of the Nazi historians: "His hard will ensured that homeland and front were fired to undreamed-of accomplishments.

For that reason he was the most hated German to all enemies of the Reich. The Jewish traitors and traitors friendly with the Jews in the homeland arranged his dismissal by the Kaiser in 1918. From then on the war went quickly to its bitter end."¹⁰¹

The Great War brought to the fore several unorthodox heroes, Adolf Hitler being the prime example, who soon aligned themselves with Herculean figures of the stature of Ludendorff. Again and again the textbook writers emphasized the role of the war in identifying those unknowns, who possessed the strength of will to turn the nation back to greatness. Their task, of course, was compounded by the collapse of the Reich and the coming to power of the traitorous Weimar Republic.

But where was there a possibility for the unknown, nameless, destitute one to bring this colossal work to fulfillment? The enemy slammed Germany into chains by the

Diktat of Versailles, tore provinces from her, imposed vast tribute. The German people were agitated and divided more than at any other time. The Reds, the Communists, agitated against fatherland, army, national pride; they attempted to erect in Germany the rule of violence. Adolf Hitler sprang forth when he heard such speeches in the barracks in Munich: "Those are lies!" 102

To make the efforts of the "young Siegfried" more impressive, the texts indulged all of the most pessimistic possibilities for Germany. They permitted even Hitler a single moment of despair: November 11, 1918: "It had all been in vain. In vain all of the sacrifices and privation, forgotten the hours clutched in mortal fear in which we nevertheless did our duty, and forgotten the deaths of two million." But in the end Hitler looked up through his tears and "resolved to become a politician."103

In a chapter entitled "Men Make History," the authors of *Ewige Strasse* applauded the young Hitler, who, against impossible odds, rose "from an unknown soldier of the front to victorious field marshal."104 Hitler thus demonstrated the ultimate in leadership: he enjoyed the status of *Schicksals-Wender* (fate-changer). The authority of this leader later affected every dimension of German life. Karl Christoffel claimed for Adolf Hitler the power to enact laws by his own authority: he was "the exclusive lawgiver of the Reich."105

By the eve of World War II, Hitler had amassed an array of foreign policy victories which were paraded before the eyes of German pupils as evidence of his stature as hero in history. "What unbelievably great events! In one year the Fuehrer had created Greater-Germany and restored ten million *Volksgeossen* to the

Reich." In the new order in central Europe, "Germany was again a world power."¹⁰⁶ The extravagance of such praise was explained by Carl Jung, who declared: "A mass always produced a 'Leader,' who almost infallibly became the victim of his own inflated ego-consciousness."¹⁰⁷ The following excerpt from a *Klasse-5* text revealed a movement out of control. The authors' self-restraint melted away as they transgressed the rhetorical line marking the point of no return:

Iron-hard decisiveness, unshakable will to victory, fanatical belief in the eternal Germany grips the entire folk. For this Germany was indeed no longer led by a Bethmann-Hollweg [World War I chancellor], but by Adolf Hitler, the first soldier who now put on the field gray coat and hurried to the army. He had created the best army in Europe; he had secured the West with the west wall; he had been able to amass through the four-year plan and clever eco-

conomic stockpiling gigantic quantities of raw materials and foodstuffs.

108

The most seasoned scholars in the German Reich momentarily succumbed to the spirit of chauvinistic euphoria. Even the preeminent historian and enemy of the regime, Friedrich Meinecke, was swept with the tide. After the fall of France, Meinecke exclaimed: "Joy, wonder, pride. . . . How could the heart not quicken? It was indeed astonishing and, I dare say, the greatest positive achievement of the Third Reich."¹⁰⁹

Beneath the verbiage of the Nazi textbooks, it was not made clear whether the German folk molded this leader, thus deserving him, or whether the will of the man imposed itself on the historical situation.¹¹⁰ Children in the Nazi schools were regularly reminded that their Fuehrer made the history of their time. "When we survey the life of Adolf Hitler, we pass through the most important period of time in German history."¹¹¹ The description of Weimar Germany's decomposition and demoralization surely indicated that Hitler had personally transformed history. The next logical step was to make Hitler's transformation permanent by providing the people with a proper education. For the Nazis distrusted the ability of the collective folk to call forth their leaders unaided.

Nature, Struggle, and History

Only he who struggles with fate can have Providence on his side.
Adolf Hitler, 1939

That the earth is a battlefield is the will of its creator. For he has not created it as a paradise. It is the deepest conviction of Adolf Hitler that the combative element of man is the fulfillment of a divine law and that only he who fulfills this law can await the blessings of Providence. . . .

But we, into whose hands the Fuehrer has placed the schools, have to find the way . . . to educate the young generation now and in the future through purposeful arrangement of the schools, that it can prevail in the competition of life.

Bernhard Rust, 1936

Although generally within the tradition of philosophies that embraced the organic view of life, National Socialist views on nature revealed the same contradictions that plagued other aspects of their *Weltanschauung*. The official Nazi cosmology was monistic in the best tradition of German idealism, but statements by leading Nazis frequently contained elements of dualism as well.

Hitler, like Oswald Spengler, usually proclaimed a cyclical interpretation of history, dividing the past into a succession of human ages, with each going through the four biological, or seasonal, stages

of development. The German Fuehrer sometimes expressed a surprising fondness for nature, which contrasted sharply with his harsh social Darwinist pronouncements. "It is possible to satisfy the needs of the inner life by an intimate communication with nature," he once wrote. On another occasion he declared that "an educated man retains the sense of the mysteries of nature, and bows before the unknowable." 112

Although Hitler's speeches and writings contained many references to the soul and spirit, he just as frequently denied any basic difference between organic and inorganic substances. In 1941, he said: "From now on, one can consider that there is no gap between organic and inorganic worlds. Recent experiments make it possible to wonder what distinguishes live bodies from inorganic matter." Hitler at times revealed a strong relativistic bent of mind, again sharply contrasted with National Socialist absolutist racial doctrines. Denying that either institutions or living beings had permanence, he admitted that every human institution nevertheless was "convinced of its everlastingness." . . . "The hardest steel grows weary. Just as it is certain that one day the earth will disappear, so it is certain that works of man will be overthrown."113

Hitler's view of nature subordinated the harmony and the nobility of the Hegelian view of the world to the hideous and cruel characteristics of the Darwinian view. Hugh Trevor-Roper branded him "a complete materialist," and whatever his intellectual belief may have been, Hitler's actions took no account of the immaterial. He indulged in cynicism of the most stark variety. "I have not come into the world to make men better, but to make use of their

weaknesses," he once confessed. Avoiding "lean and hungry" ascetics with "rings under their eyes," he preferred corrupt men as did Shakespeare's Caesar.¹¹⁴

Hitler's frequent forays into metaphysical speculation were sophomoric. On one occasion in December 1941, he told his dinner guests: "The soul and the mind migrate just as the body returns to nature. Thus life is eternally reborn from. . . . The soul is unplumbable." Unlike many of his other utterances, this statement suggested a dualism of body and soul, but Hitler quickly removed from his listeners' minds any notion that the disposition of the soul concerned him in the least. "To make life easier for people, the Church holds out to them the bait of a better world. We for our part, confine ourselves to asking man to fashion his life worthily. For this it is sufficient for him to conform to the laws of nature." Later that evening, Hitler uttered what must be regarded as one of the crudest descriptions ever given of the deity and of the meaning of life: "If today you do harm to the Russians, it is to avoid giving them the

opportunity of doing harm to us. God does not act differently. He suddenly hurls the masses of humanity onto the earth, and leaves it to each one to work out his own salvation. Men displace one another, and one perceives that, at the end of it all, it is always the stronger who triumphs. Is that not the most reasonable order of things?" 115

Philipp Lenard, a 1905 Nobel Prize winner, attempting the wellnigh impossible task of synthesizing National Socialist views on nature, avoided a completely materialist conception by dividing all knowledge into natural and spiritual sciences. While placing all animate matter in the realm of the spirit, Lenard insisted that an organism's racial origins determined its spirit. Lenard anchored his view of the fundamental unity of nature in a divine plan that held organic systems in balance. He readily acknowledged the mystery involved in his explanation, and, as did many National Socialist philosophers, he apparently delighted in it, stating, "There is, as our innermost being teaches us, a portion of the world inaccessible to us." Lenard's lack of access to the immaterial realm did not shake his firm conviction that human races, like "fleas and elephants," had different spiritual constitutions.¹¹⁶

Another prominent German scientist, George Usadel, retained Lenard's concept of the soul but denied its existence apart from the substance of the body. Indeed, Usadel denied the soul independent life or substance: "It follows from this that all emotional and intellectual life finds embodiment in the entirety of corporeal life." Usadel proposed a classic National Socialist argument for abandoning objective science in favor of instinctive learning. There was no difference in the way "the Chinese use the results of science

and the way the Germans use them," but he argued that the contemplative tendencies of non-Germans left them far short of the "fighting spirit and faith in the nation" which elevated German science far above that of its rivals.¹¹⁷

In spite of his public homage to blood and mystery, Hitler clearly indicated in private conversation that he understood the role of objective science, which, he said, was "always striving according to the momentary state of knowledge to deduce what is true." And he added, "When it makes a mistake, it does so in good faith."¹¹⁸ Hitler then proceeded to attack religion for relying upon metaphysical assumptions that could not be modified when conditions changed. He could not have embraced any more securely the old bugaboo of relativism and tentative truth. These private statements on objective science are far removed from Ernst Krieck's mystical assertion that knowledge is "attitude" and rests upon a "preexisting image in the mind of the scholar."¹¹⁹

Hitler wished to avoid at all costs the public appearance of materialistic sterility. Therefore, the National Socialist organic view of nature served a political function: it demonstrated its superiority over Marxist conceptions. Hitler railed against the Marxists' "stupid godless propaganda," which was acceptable only to the "empty urban masses." The Fuehrer told Hermann Rauschning: "Unless we give the masses something in exchange for what we take from them, they will later fall prey to every kind of swindle." If Rauschning's account is to be believed, Hitler even suggested that German peasants, who maintained the enrichment of their links with the soil, be sent as missionaries to the urban masses, who had experienced the extinction of all belief. 120

If the Nazi dictator entertained convictions that could be termed "religious," his creed began and ended with the struggle for existence. Herein lay Hitler's antipathy for Christianity, as he told Rauschning: "But for our people it is decisive whether they acknowledge the Jewish Christ-creed with its effeminate pity-ethics, or a strong, heroic belief in God in nature, God in our people, in our destiny, in our blood."¹²¹

Hitler's organic view of nature mingled uncomfortably with his stronger inclination to accept struggle as the only meaningful experience in life. The powerful Darwinian leitmotif fired the imagination of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose writings inspired Hitler and spread the influence of *The Origin of the Species* among millions in Germany. Chamberlain believed that since "some of the greatest racehorses" were themselves the offspring of racehorses, the human race should also exert the utmost care in the matter of breeding.¹²² The zeal for selective

breeding had little or nothing to do with struggle, but belief in that theory indicated a profound distrust of leaving the German people to their own devices. Selective breeding, at least in the Nazi scheme, was another name for an interventionist policy that would load the genetic dice in favor of the Germans.

Struggle was the father of the official Nazi creed: not only did it render certain the survival of the strong in accordance with the "eternal law of nature," but struggle also justified the extermination of the weak. The rule of "tooth and claw" thus served a beneficial function because it prevented "universal decay and ensured further achievement." Furthermore, struggle transcended a policy of "might makes right"; it determined the outcome of the "cosmic struggle for survival and greatness."¹²³ The belief in struggle lay like a block of granite in the center of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. Hitler wrote: "Even today it is not by the principles of humanity that man lives or is able to preserve himself above the animal world, but solely by means

of the most brutal struggle." 124

Man as a species fought by means of brutality and intelligence to reach the pinnacle of the natural order. Likewise, nations of men struggled for hegemony in world affairs. Losers in this competition receive their just dessert and deserved no pity. Because the fight for existence was never-ending, those yearning for comfort and ease were marked for early extermination. Hitler never deviated from this conviction: "Right exists only when it is created and protected by power and force."125

Hans Schemm, the Bavarian minister of education, followed his master's lead in articulating the role of struggle in education. The following quotation is from his book, *Deutsche Schule und Deutsche Erziehung*:

National Socialism knows only the concept of struggle as the disposition and content of life. . . . Adolf Hitler sets up goals continuously. When one goal is reached, he sets up the next, and when the next is reached, a still more beautiful one comes, and this establishment of goals will never cease. Never will Adolf Hitler stand before his people and say: "Now we are finished. Now we have everything that we need, now no more struggle and strife, now begins an easy stagnant life." National Socialism will never be finished with struggle; it will always want to strive after something new.126

Hans-Jochen Gamm, author of *Der Braune Kult*, went even further, arguing that in the Nazi ethos, "God is struggle." This god, however, was not one of compassion and love but a "gloomy, violent deity."127

Because the preservation of blood purity was the crucial factor in national survival, blood-crossing always sacrificed the greatness of

the superior parent. Therefore, Hitler could argue: "To bring about such a development is . . . nothing but to sin against the will of the eternal creator. . . . Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live."¹²⁸ Even the dogma of Aryan superiority at times was surrendered to Hitler's fundamental belief in the efficacy of struggle.

In the same manner that the Jew constituted the cement that held together a wide variety of Hitler's foes, anti-Semitism formed the nexus between the concepts of race and struggle in the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Jews represented the antithesis of Aryan traits, although they won a grudging respect from Hitler for their remarkable ability to survive thousands of years of dispersal and persecution: "What people . . . has gone through greater upheavals than this

one and nevertheless issued from the mightiest catastrophe of mankind unchanged? What an infinitely tough will to live and preserve the species speaks from these facts!" 129 As religionists often do when contemplating the resilience of evil forces, Hitler attributed to the Jews a tenacity that equaled or even exceeded that of his own people.

Vienna's urban wasteland and the landscape of World War I shaped both Hitler's philosophy of life and his notions about the proper education for youth. "I am grateful for those days, that I became hard and can be hard," Hitler wrote.¹³⁰ The cold climate of Hitler's early life provoked his equally stern prescription for the schooling of German youth. He disclosed to Hermann Rauschning:

My system of education is a harsh one. Weakness must be stamped out. The world will shrink in trepidation from the youngsters who grow up in my Ordensburg. A violent, masterful, dauntless, cruel younger generation that is my aim. There must be nothing weak and tender about it. Its eyes must glow once more with the freedom and splendour of the beast of prey. I want them trained in every form of physical exercise. . . . I want them to learn to conquer the fear of death by undergoing the severest ordeals. That is the heroic stage of youth.¹³¹

The psychological preparation for and acceptance of war was a conscious aim of Nationalist Socialist education. And because war was the highest form of struggle, it was also the greatest good a war was to be desired at least every twenty-five years. War provided the purest distillation of the qualities required for a proper life.¹³² On the other hand, the degenerate force of pacifism caused human life to fade away, to the advantage of creatures who adhered more closely to nature's admonitions. Hitler proclaimed: "As long as the

earth turns around the sun, as long as there are cold and warmth, fertility and infertility, storm and sunshine, so long will struggle continue, among men and among nations." Furthermore, "If people lived in the Garden of Eden they would rot."¹³³

For all of his bellicose posturing and malevolence, Hitler's career stands as a monument to the most pathetic personal weakness. His truculence was an imitation of strength. A weakling must vociferously denounce gentle characteristics because he recognizes that he cannot assume such qualities without exposing his own weakness. His denunciation is a tacit admission of the worth of that which he condemns. Likewise, the serene exterior of the gentle is also a cloak, but it may conceal a durable and unscratchable diamond, for example, a Tolstoy or a Lincoln.

Curiously, the weakling always evades a direct collision of his own harsh-sounding philosophy with the degenerate style of life he fears. The weakling must pose as the enemy of weakness. The least sympathy for the downtrodden opens up the prospect that he may be exposed as one of them and recognized as inferior. He tries to position himself the maximum distance from those he recognizes in his heart of hearts as most like himself.

The tyrant's contempt for the weak is a disguised contempt for himself, or rather a contempt for qualities he recognizes in himself as inferior. He is terrified of possible exposure and therefore allows no one to see the weak human creature behind the veil. Yet the unmistakable awareness that in his inner essence he is a poor, miserable wretch no different from millions of other frightened sojourners on his planet arouses in his heart the most profound disquiet. Posturing removes him from the possibility of rehabilitation. Then, when his *Angst* reaches the level of total despair, he can conceal the fear within his soul by only one desperate stratagem: cruelty.

The truly strong man can afford to show compassion to the weak. The secret strength of the gentle lies in their willingness to offer to the weak an open hand rather than a mailed fist, precisely because strength harbors no fear of weakness. The differences between the gentle hand of the recognized leader and the slashing fist of the dictator are the latter's ingrained fear of the masses and his unconscious recognition that he could not lead them by the authority of his character alone.

A strong man can associate with outcasts without relinquishing either the aura of his strength or the mystery of his power, but in

doing so he incurs the wrath of those who denounce outcasts in order to enhance themselves, such as the frenzied mob leaders who demanded the deaths of Socrates and Jesus. Hence only the strong never the weakling masquerading as the strong can transform the lives of the weak.

Posing as a militarist was a sure way to disguise one's weakness. Hitler's sentiments on war, despite their stark cynicism, laid bare his apprehension about the future and his fears of German extinction. The people must be artificially purified at regular intervals. The possibility of oblivion touched Hitler's spirit to the quick. Education was to prepare Germans to accept "periodic ritual purifications." Nor was there any finality in Hitler's concept of war: "War is constant; war is everywhere. There is no beginning, there is no conclusion of peace. War is life. All struggle is war. War is the primal condition." 134

National Socialist educators introduced the party's social Darwinist views early in the children's education, even in the *Kinderfibel* of

the youngest pupils. Discussing the passing of winter, the growth of flowers, the stirring of peasants in their fields, one author said: "We all begin a new year of work. We want to be diligent and capable." After discussing the need to provide for family and children, the writer injected a stock Nazi doctrine: "God has prospered and blessed our work in the past year. We ask Him also to stand with us in the new year. God always helps his people when they are worthy and capable." 135 Even in the *Kinderfibel* the thrust of the Nazi message came through clearly God helps those who help themselves.

The theme of competition and struggle was developed further in the books of readings for intermediate age pupils. One selection in *Guck in die Welt* featured a lad by the name of Werner, who "enjoys gymnastics because he is so good at it. . . . Once he was first in his row. The instructor called: 'Attention, ready, go! Werner had not been so attentive. Much too late he dashed off. Then Werner's row lost. The next time Werner made everything right. He ran energetically and finished much before the others.'" 136 A selection from another book of readings quoted the Fuehrer's speech of March 4, 1933, in which he discussed lies and truth: "The first notion of this truth is the one that a power must understand, that its future lies only in its own power, in its capability, in its diligence and in its courage. For the world does not help; a people must help itself. One's own strength is the fountain of life. The All-Mighty has given it to us to use and through [our own strength] to lead the struggle of our lives." 137

The theme of struggle was the unifying thread woven throughout the Nazi history textbooks. Life was portrayed as a struggle from

the time of the earliest Germanic warriors to the soldiers of the Third Reich, whose tenacity was pitted against a Russian winter.¹³⁸

Even when discussing such a normally dull topic as the commercial activity of the Hanseatic League, the Nazi writers found the opportunity to inject their own well-worn themes into the textbooks. They emphasized almost exclusively the competition of the league, not commercial competition per se, but nationalistic competition between German merchants and their foreign rivals. The authors of one *Geschichtsbuch* converted tradesman Paul Benecke into a passionate German patriot, who uttered the following diatribe when challenged by a Latin rival: "If we still want to demonstrate the standard of our forefathers with our heart and fist as Germans, so should the prize not escape. But now I must listen as the Latins shout after us: 'Get the German dogs!' Should not an honorable German rather die than hear such things?"¹³⁹

Surprisingly, the Nazi authors did not approve all forms of com-

petition. The virtues of business competition sometimes conflicted with those of National Socialism, and the texts generally depicted the late nineteenth-century industrialization of Germany as the triumph of the forces of mammon. Despite the nation's becoming "continually richer" during the time of Wilhelm II, the frantic "dance around the golden calf" robbed individuals of their "inner worth." 140

The Nazis identified the world of mammon with the growth of Jewish power. The Jew supposedly reigned supreme in the city, and urban life, it was charged, annihilated the consciousness of race and folk. Yet when Nazi historians viewed the meteoric growth of German industrial power, they showed undeniable ambivalence: a grudging pride in their nation's rise to power coupled with a tendency to lament the process: "Ever-increasing numbers of people went into industry. In 1816, 78 percent of the Prussian population lived on the land . . . in 1907 only 29 percent."¹⁴¹ (Perhaps the Nazis should have embraced the plan of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Jewish treasury secretary, Henry Morgenthau, who proposed to strip Germany of industry and return her to a pastoral existence.)

In the quarter century before the outbreak of the Great War, enormous population increases in Germany (from forty-nine million in 1890 to sixty-eight million in 1913) produced an urgent clamor for more land. "In Germany 120 lived on one square kilometer, in Austria-Hungary 76, in France 76, in Russia well under 25 people. . . . The Germans became a people without space." The twin problems of race and space were intertwined in National Socialist doctrine. The space dilemma could not be settled

without war, but Wilhelm II "desired peace" and "was not the man to take upon himself such a great responsibility."¹⁴² The old nemesis of poor leadership once again thwarted German aims.

The *Götterdämmerung*, Hitler's beloved Wagner opera, offered additional insights into the Nazi concept of struggle. The Germanic gods were defeated, but a new world was born out of the wreckage of their heroic struggle. Thus, "The eternal struggle begins anew."¹⁴³ For Hitler and a significant portion of the generation of the World War, the conflict never ended but simply smoldered, waiting to burst into flame once more. Peace was stale and unpleasant; the warriors yearned to close with the eternal adversary. When the time came, the textbook justifications were so patently absurd that even Hitler probably had difficulty swallowing the talk about "three master races" and their "historic missions."¹⁴⁴ In the final analysis, war required no justification, only military force and audacity.

Hitler clung to his view of struggle to the last, unforgiving hours of his life. Cornered in his Berlin bunker, raging against real and imagined enemies, his empire in shambles, Hitler returned again and

again to the validity of the struggle for existence. When finally forced to acknowledge his own failure and Germany's defeat, he steadfastly refused to concede the defeat of his idea. After insisting for twenty-five years that the West was soft and decadent, Hitler apparently took some comfort in naming Stalin as his real conqueror. He stressed that the Russian dictator, unlike Winston Churchill and Roosevelt, understood the meaning of the twentieth century. 145

Hitler's actions in the last days suggested that he preferred the Russian occupation of Germany to that of the democratic powers. Stalin, as the new Genghis Khan, the representative of raw, brute force, was more like Hitler than was any other contemporary leader. On one fundamental point, Hitler was consistent to the end: destiny marked the weak for extinction. When he ordered Albert Speer to "scorch" the same earth which in earlier, happier days he had repeatedly called "sacred," his justification was the crude but familiar Darwinism to which he had clung since the early days of his movement: "If the war is lost, the people will be lost also. It is not necessary to worry about what the German people will need for elemental survival. On the contrary, it is best for us to destroy even these things. *For the nation has proved to be the weaker, and the future belongs solely to the stronger eastern nation.* In any case only those who are inferior will remain after this struggle, for the good have already been killed."146

Hitler's worst fear had come true. The Aryans had lost the contest with the Slavs, and according to his own ideology, the losers deserved annihilation. He could now extinguish his miserable existence, knowing at least that the Germans had succumbed in full

accordance with his own theory. In this way, Stalin proved that Hitler's interpretation of life was correct; and more than anything else, Hitler hated to be wrong.

The positive aims of Hitler's ideology included the building of the new order in Europe; the negative aim was the extirpation of alien influences from the Continent. The history textbook served as an important instrument in realizing a goal that necessitated a metaphysical act of conversion. The "purified" Reich remained only a possibility not a condition to be anticipated with certainty.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the sense of urgency evident in the textbooks (and in German life under the Nazis) betrayed their unmistakable anxiety about the future. Nature ordained the principle the struggle for existence as the vehicle for human progress, but the same natural principle was no respecter either of persons or races.

The Germans were the "chosen" people only so long as, through ruthlessness and superior intelligence, they remained on the upper-

most rung of the ladder of nature. The most basic fact of life was the inherent inequality of all living things. Since the evolution of life was influenced by such "spiritual" principles as struggle and superior leadership, an enthusiastic treatment of the German past could help create the élan necessary for German ascendancy.

Chapter Four

The Secular Religious Character of National Socialist History

This Third Reich has become the hope of the hopeless, the faith of the confused, the victory of the vanquished. . . . It is a mysterious entity that is not intelligible by the reason. It is a more mysterious, enigmatic brilliance, a softer tone, a more private, more sacred thought, incomprehensible for him who is not of the same spirit. But it is also an entity that separates men in belief and unbelief, courage and faint-heartedness, hope and despair, old age and youth.

Andreas Hohlfeld, 1933

In the same sense that National Socialism was more than a political party, the history written by the Nazis was more than a mere record of the past. Because National Socialism desired to be recognized as a *Weltanschauung*, in its fullest cosmic meaning, the study of history in the schools of the Third Reich by necessity was designed to nurture and to vindicate that *Weltanschauung*. The founders of the National Socialist movement fully intended to spawn an ersatz religion, and that impulse was intensified by the brutality of the battle for Germany which preceded Hitler's assumption of power. In short, National Socialism was a total party, desiring to seize the individual as well as the folk. 1

This tendency toward totality was historically exhibited only by religious confessions and divine-right monarchs. In the Third Reich, however, the yearning for a folkish *Heiland* (redeemer) replaced the emphasis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries upon religion and of the eighteenth upon absolutism. History

instructors were told to stress the "historical mission of the Fuehrer Adolf Hitler" and to weld a "normative affective emotional bond" between their pupils and the charismatic Fuehrer.²

Hans Müller identified various religious tenets that saturated the history written by the Nazis: "The universal Jew was evil pure and simple. The Aryan represented the good. Race-mixing was the greatest sin. Paradise fall of man redemption these are emulations of the religious impulse." 3 Dr. Joseph Goebbels spoke of the victory of *light* (the blond race) over *darkness* (alien races). The constant exhortation to children to place their unblemished bodies on the holy altar of Germany as blood sacrifices in order to effect a transformation of history was certainly a perversion of the religious impulse. The regime constantly emphasized secret rites, swastikas, runes, and the rediscovery of ancestral customs.⁴

National Socialism was an ersatz religion because that was what its Fuehrer wished it to be. He was supremely aware of the void felt by modern man because of the decline of viable religious belief. Always an opportunist, Hitler offered his party's program as a substitute for that lost faith, as he explicitly stated in a speech in 1923: "That is the most stupendous thing, that our movement should create for the broad, searching and erring masses a new belief upon which they can have absolute confidence and built, that they not be forsaken in this world of confusion, that they find again at least in some place a position where their hearts can rest easy."⁵

Those drifting in the passionless sea of postwar Germany drank in the Fuehrer's words and committed themselves to his mission. Heinrich Himmler, formerly a conventional though somewhat prudish Catholic, found himself, in the wake of Germany's defeat, falling under the sway of a new messiah: "[Hitler] rose up out of our deepest need, when the German people had come to a dead end. He is one of those brilliant figures which always appear in the

Germanic world when it has reached a final crisis in body, mind, and soul. . . . It has been ordained by the Karma of the Germanic world that he should wage war against the East and save the Germanic peoples a figure of the greatest brilliance has become incarnate in his person."6

Not even an ersatz religion could serve its adherents without a confession of faith, and the Nazi histories abounded in them. The following was but one of many offered to German youth:

A Confession of Faith

I believe in the German mother who gave me birth.

I believe in the German peasant who breaks the sod for his people.

I believe in the German worker who performs work for his people.

I believe in the dead who gave their lives for their people.

For my god is my people.
I believe in Germany! 7

The History Textbook as a Record of Divine Revelation

Is not the divine revelation of the original Gospel manifest today in the reality of the Third Reich.

Ernst Krieck, *ANTHROPOLOGIE*

I might not be a sanctimonious church-goer, that is not what I am. But still deep down I am a religious person.

Adolf Hitler, (JUNE 26, 1944)

The chief concern of National Socialist educators was always to raise up heroic men and women who, as a part of their birthright, would refashion the world according to their movement's vision of reality. In the National Socialist scheme of things, "fate takes precedence over Providence." The destiny of the German folk would never be surrendered to external forces, either human or divine.⁸

Even Hans Kerrl, the Nazi minister of church affairs, exploited the prestige of his office and backed the political movement's plans to usurp the redemptive function of religion. "National Socialism is itself a religion," he conceded; and the "religion" had in common with conventional faiths its "daily obligations to God and the divine order of things." According to Kerrl, this religion had truly moved mountains, and he admonished the faithful: "Believe in the mission that God himself has implanted in you. Recognize for a fact that the main factor is not words, but deeds, and rest assured that God placed you in the world that being Germans you should care for Germany. Then shall you see how a miracle descends not, it is true, from heaven but our faith brings its fulfillment."⁹

Wolfgang Hammer defined the Nazi faith as a "secular pseudonaturalistic 'eschatology'" in which Hitler played the role of providentially chosen "fate-changer [*Schicksals-Wender*], a profane *Heiland* and cultural architect." Hitler habitually expressed himself in religious categories, a practice Hammer traced to his Austrian Catholic milieu. A former choirboy and son of a devout mother, Hitler admitted having been so deeply impressed by the magnificence of the Roman Catholic divine service that he seriously contemplated the priestly calling.¹⁰ Hitler's early life and that of Stalin bear remarkable parallels: for each a bitter father-son antagonism was never resolved, and the brutal, drunken, agnostic father ultimately prevailed over the prayerful mother in the contest for the son's allegiance.

The young Hitler relinquished his religious faith at the same time that he adopted a truculent brand of German nationalism. Because during Hitler's youth the German nationality progressively lost influence in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this seemingly irreversible drift perhaps conditioned Hitler to fear a similar decline for Germans elsewhere. Hitler shed no tears for the Habsburgs; they not only had forsaken the German mission, but when they pulled the German Reich down with them in 1918, they had committed a grievous sin. The portent of that apocalyptic event explained much of the urgency of Nazi historical writing. Hammer explained: "The year 1918 contained for Hitler the weight of a *Heilsgeschichtlich* incision in German history. The defeat was more than a lost battle, a lost war. It was a 'shame, disgrace, humiliation' and at the same time 'deserved.' The *Caesura* of 1918 was similarly perceived by most Germans." 11

To reverse the decline of Germany and to atone for the defeat of 1918 required that education assume extraordinary dimensions. The Nazi prescription for the upbringing of Germany's youth was drastic: a "religious education." Helmut Stellrecht in *Neue Erziehung* referred to "true instruction" as "religious instruction." The spiritual shock of the Great War, according to the Nazi educationist, set in motion a political renewal that would include in its consummation a religious rebirth as well. Engulfed by emergency, the postwar generation needed transcendence. Stellrecht wrote: "We speak of eternal folk, of eternal blood and of eternal Reich, although we know precisely in the epoch of the natural sciences that they are not eternal in the sense of being everlasting." When Stellrecht employed the term "eternal" he referred to the "eternal will," which manifested itself in "great

figures." Historically, Germans had been "wanderers between two worlds," according to Stellrecht: the tangible world of the "ground under foot" and the intangible world of eternity. "But to us [God] has lifted up the infinity of the Cosmos." Stellrecht called the "folk-God relationship" the highest stage in the education of the individual.¹²

Robert G. L. Waite has argued that Hitler's anxiety about his own health was subconsciously projected onto Germans collectively. According to Waite, Hitler's overprotective mother, who had lost several infants, not only treated her little surviving son, Adolf, as a unique gift from heaven but succeeded in making him paranoid about any threat to his life (germs, dirt, disease, microbes). Hitler's fear of Jewish "contamination" was all too obviously linked to his aversion for germs, uncleanness, and death.¹³

A mere phobia, whether a fear of germs or any other irrational fear, however, fails to explain the unmitigated vehemence of Hitler's attack upon his enemies. The determination to rid the world of filth,

that is, evil, more likely represented a perversion of the understanding of the metaphysical nature of man. Hitler realigned the spiritual categories of Western man. Werner Maser reported that in the "small hours" Hitler was troubled by his doctrines and mission, yet he clung to them to the end. He was "fully determined to leave behind a Reich without Jews." After the failure of the plot against his life on July 20, 1944, the Fuehrer reaffirmed his belief in himself and in his mission: "If I ever harbored any doubts about the task entrusted to me by Providence, I have none left now." Maser maintained that Hitler's belief in a Supreme Being was not simulated but was genuine and instinctive. 14

The Nazi concept of the divine creator included no Heavenly Father who nurtured the race with loving care but a being who would not hesitate to plunge his chosen people into oblivion if they disobeyed his racial laws. The history written by National Socialists was a record of Germanic man's faltering attempts to abide by the harsh dictates of this racial deity. As L. G. Tirala, author of *Rasse, Geist und Seele*, wrote: "Everything is brought into the world, not as a gift of an angel or devil, but as a gift, a disposition, coming from our ancestors." To preserve that gift and to ensure its safe passage through the chain of coming generations like an Aryan Ark of the Covenant consumed the energies of those responsible for German education. In a statement to the Reichstag on January 1, 1937, Hitler said: "Perhaps for the first time in the history of man, a nation has realized that of all the tasks laid upon our shoulders the most sacred and most inspiring is the preservation of the pure blood given us by God." An abbreviated exhortation appeared in a Nazi history textbook:

"People live eternally, if they have the will and the strength for sensible racial politics."¹⁵

The fidelity to race sometimes turned family members against one another in a manner reminiscent of the early Christian movement. ("For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" Matt. 10:35.) The Germanic hero, Armin, conqueror of the Romans at Teutoberger Forest, faced the treachery of his brother, who wielded a Roman sword against his own people. Armin's father-in-law and his daughter also collaborated with the enemy. Armin preserved the virgin purity of the German lands against violation by foreign troops, while "his wife and his three-year-old son were led in triumphant march through Rome."¹⁶ The German Eden was ultimately desecrated by the entrance of Jews, by miscegenation, and by worship of the Israelites' golden calf.

One author after another recounted the process by which alien groups absorbed "pure" German tribes, who, because of their wan-

dering, became counterparts of the lost tribes of Israel. As *Ewige Strasse*, recounted, "The Germanic Franks mixed with the Gauls. The unitary confession of faith [Christianity] fostered this race-mixing. Thus the Romance nations came out of the Germans, Celts, and Romans." 17 The contamination of the racial inheritance brought immediate disaster, and the gospel according to the Nazis offered no assurance that the gates of Hell would not claim the defilers of the blood.

The textbook accounts of the beginnings of the Nazi movement overflowed with religious imagery. The young Hitler reached his age of enlightenment as a nationalist when he happened upon his father's two-volume history of the Franco-Prussian War. "He read with passion-flushed cheeks and forgot to play and to study." But the revelation that his own German brothers in Austria "failed to participate in that nationalistic war created in his mind the desire to change that destiny to fulfill that historic mission." 18

Wolfgang Hammer credited Richard Wagner with inspiring the messianic element in the Nazi movement. The art and ideology of the composer "created a mental disposition and a susceptibility for Hitler's messianism." Hitler described his reaction when, at the age of twelve, he heard *Lohengrin* for the first time: "With a blow I was captivated." His youthful enthusiasm for the Bayreuth master turned him into an "artistic revolutionary," he said. Hammer questioned whether Hitler's *Lohengrin* fixation during his thirteenth year might not have been an afterthought designed to establish himself as a child prodigy. 19

The future dictator's enlightenment came in stages. Having become a nationalist after reading a history of the Franco-Prussian War and

a revolutionary upon attending a Wagner opera, he was transformed into a messiah during the Great War. The mystical Fuehrer, a simple and unknown soldier, orphaned years earlier, had entered the Great War to do his duty. He had "no one in the homeland to worry about him." Throughout the war, there were subtle suggestions of miracles and claims of providential care in the accounts of the war experiences of this peculiar hero.²⁰ "A gas attack robbed him of his eyesight. So Adolf Hitler experienced the end of the war in the military hospital at Pasewalk in Pomerania. Forty-eight battles he had honorably survived. Now he was blind and because of the sacrifices of the war one of the poorest. He wanted to bear this hard fate as a man. *And yet the gas lost its power, and the veil fell from his eyes.*"²¹ A story circulated that while blinded Hitler saw a swastika sign on the wall of the hospital.²²

The falling of the scales from Hitler's eyes, both literally and figuratively, had miraculous connotations. The subsequent return of

his sight convinced him of the acuity of his inner vision: he had a mission. He saw clearly the path that lay ahead both for Germany and for himself. One textbook dramatically described his rise: "And then he picked himself up. Now adieu, profession! When the fatherland is in danger, whoever has another thought than to save it, is not worthy to live in a free land. Down with the November criminals! Germany awake! 23

The crime of Germany's betrayal demanded vengeance. The unknown corporal resolved "to become a politician" in order to "save the German people and to settle accounts with its destroyers."24 Millions of front fighters refused either to demobilize psychologically or to accept the verdict of the war, but Hitler's solution to Germany's plight was different from that of those who entered paramilitary organizations after the war. His was not a battle "with weapon in hand" but that of a "political soldier and statesman."25

When invited by the tiny German Workers' party to become its seventh member, Hitler faced "one of the greatest decisions in his life." The textbooks treated Hitler's entry into politics, as well as his survival of the debacle at the *Feldherrnhalle* in 1923, as miraculous events. The following accounts appeared in the textbooks: "The party had only six members; it lacked everything: typewriters, membership cards, staples, in addition to that, experience. Only one thing was there: goodwill and faith. Adolf Hitler joined. . . . Out of this infinitesimal beginning he has made the million-member NSDAP."26 And another:

Hitler visited the meeting of the "little band" of party members in the cellar of the Sterneckerbrau in the fall of 1919. Could this little group

be the vehicle through which his will and genius were to be projected? The thought continually gnawed at him: "You are a nobody!" The prospects of success were grim in the extreme. In the party treasury were 7.50 marks. The party had . . . not even a rubber stamp. Was this really the place in which Hitler could begin his work? He stood before the most difficult decision of his life. And yet he found here what he was looking for: the faith in Germany and the will to rise again. So he joined; he received membership card number seven.²⁷

The abortive putsch in 1923 created martyrs for the movement. On the morning of the march, Hitler learned "that he had been betrayed,"²⁸ and although many of the fainthearted deserted him, the Fuehrer ordered the march to proceed as planned. The army and the police were ready. "Had Ulrich Graf not covered the Fuehrer

with his body, everything could well have come to an end." 29 This was only one of the countless instances of the providential sparing of Hitler for the completion of his mission. The old fighters returned to Munich each year on November 9 to reenact the trek down the *Feldherrnhalle* the party's Golgotha experience.³⁰

At his trial for high treason, Hitler continued to play upon the theme of martyrdom and predicted victory for those who persevered in the faith. In his speech to the court (which was quoted in a *Klasse-I* textbook), Hitler said:

The hour will come when the *Reichswehr* [army] will stand on our side, officers and men . . . the army which we have built up [Hitler's brown army] grows from day to day, from hour to hour more rapidly. Even in these days I have the proud hope that once the hour comes, then the fierce bands will grow to battalions, the battalions to regiments, the regiments to divisions, that the old cockade will be taken out of the dirt, that the old flags will fly in front, that there will be a reconciliation at the last great divine judgment which we are prepared to face. . . . Then not you, gentlemen, pronounce the sentence upon us; the eternal court of history pronounces that sentence. . . . You may pronounce us a thousand times guilty; the goddess of the eternal court of history will smile and tear to tatters the verdict of the public prosecutor; then she acquits us!³¹

The textbook writers insisted that throughout the ordeal, Hitler "not one moment . . . weakened in his belief in his mission."³²

Unknown, uneducated, and penniless in an economically prostrated land, Hitler had hardly a remote chance of becoming chancellor of Germany. He was aware of the tremendous odds against him, but he ignored them. "Nonsense, impossible!" many sneered, but he simply "went about his work. . . . He had learned as a soldier that

nothing is impossible if a will stands behind it. But above all, burned in him the faith in his mission and his people."33

Many of those disoriented by the war were searching for a transforming experience, and the Nazi movement provided it. All human societies, according to Frederick Schumann, are held together "by shared emotions, by common glandular muscular responses to collective symbols, not by cold abstract intellect."34 Thus one history text prominently displayed Hermann Otto Hoyer's painting, (*In the Beginning Was the Word*), which showed young Hitler addressing a small but rapt group of followers.35 Another stated laconically: "The Fuehrer is the party, and the party is the Fuehrer."36

The similarity between Hitler's political technique and the popular lore of revivalism was neither accidental nor inconsequential. Hitler promised "alleviation of immediate ills, assured the restoration of pristine values, and gave faith in the future." 37 Time after time the Nazi leaders told of being "converted" at Nazi rallies at which Hitler spoke.

The religious imagery of Hermann Goering's entrance into the party was unmistakable. "When Hermann Goering in the year 1922 saw and heard Hitler for the first time, the famous flyer-hero devoted himself to the unknown front fighter with his entire soul."38 (Here are echoes of Jesus' terse, "Follow me.") Goering's unqualified response appears to confirm Freidrich Meinecke's theory that "suppressed metaphysical desires" explained much of Hitler's appeal. Goering said: "An entire folk, an entire nation feels itself today strong and happy because in you this people not only found a Fuehrer but in you the people also found a redeemer."39

The responsibilities of party membership, as presented by the school textbooks, resembled the demands of the more muscular religious confessions. Insisting that the party member surrender his selfish will, one textbook related: "The new party can offer its members no profit; it demands from each the sacrifice of the last penny, every minute of his free time and even the commitment of his life." Party members also faced persecutions by the "unrighteous." "Whoever is known as a party member often loses his job through Marxist-indoctrinated worker associations or Jewish employers." The promised beatings and lacerations aided the party's growth. "Communist hordes beat down the National

Socialists whom they could get hold of singly. Nonetheless the number of party comrades grew unceasingly."⁴⁰

Textbook accounts of the exploits of Hitler's subordinates frequently read like the scriptural narration of the Acts of the Apostles. Although many textbooks overlooked Dr. Joseph Goebbels altogether, a 1943 edition of one text contained two pages about his activities in Berlin as *Gauleiter* (district leader). The fears of persecution shared by the earliest Christian apostles were similar to those of the NSDAP organizers who were sent into the Berlin Marxist stronghold of the 1920s. "Whoever entered Berlin for Adolf Hitler, called himself a National Socialist, and visibly carried the swastika must be very courageous. . . . For the enemy called up his cleverest heads and his most skillful orators and newspapermen to slander or make fun of Adolf Hitler and his party." Hitler naturally selected an extraordinary man to represent him in this incorrigible city: Dr. Joseph Goebbels, his "most successful orator. . . . Dr. Goebbels persuaded and won thousands through his thrilling speeches." The "little doctor"

rarely spoke exclusively to the party faithful but much more often to hostile Marxist laborers: "The doctor stood there on the speaker's platform fearlessly and looked calmly but also with determination into the boisterous mass. . . . 'Our Doctor' he was soon called by his men." 41

All of the authors called attention to the great sacrifices of freedom and blood necessary to win Berlin. Many Berlin Nazis were jailed, some died: "SA men and Hitler Youth died for the Fuehrer and a new Germany. Unspeakable harm often came to the brown fighters and their families . . . *until the day of victory then blotted out all distress and transfigured all sacrifices.*"42

The last words of many National Socialists who died for the cause comprised what Hans-Jochen Gamm called "Brown Metaphysics." The following examples resemble the most graphic accounts of Christian martyrdom in the first century:

Kurt Neubauer (November 9, 1923): "The people will still not believe Adolf Hitler, but a time will come when they must believe."

Friedrich Meyer (December 8, 1929): "I know that I must die, and I know also for whom I die. Great Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels for me. Be true and do your duty."

Heinrich Grosmeher (July 11, 1932): "With joy I fight for the movement and now gladly die for Adolf Hitler."43

Under the heading "Horst Wessel Dies for Germany," the authors of *Ewige Strasse* related a tale of martyrdom which qualified Wessel for sainthood in the movement. As the son of a pastor, Wessel could have enjoyed a comfortable life, the readers were told. "He knew no need for money," and the lighthearted years of

youth promised him a "nice profession. . . . But he gave up everything in order to become a true National Socialist." As a missionary, Horst Wessel "gave up his comfortable dwelling" so he could live in the "red working-class sector." Soon his associates knew "what kind of a selfless spirit was in their fine *Sturmfuhrer*."44

The famous marching song penned by Horst Wessel was inspired by the transforming experiences of his persecution. One day while he and his SA group marched through the communist sector of Berlin, crowds savagely threatened their lives and surged in upon the small band. "Then Horst Wessel commanded sharply and piercingly: 'The Flags High! Close the Ranks!'" The effect of his defiant spirit gave the SA men "fresh courage and new power." The effect upon their adversaries was equally devastating. "Before their determined faces the communists gave ground. The *Sturm* flags with the

sacred symbols soared proudly aloft. . . . After this collective experience the young *Sturmfuhrer* composed his beautiful song."
45

According to Nazi historians, Horst Wessel bore the fatal wounds inflicted upon him by communists with true martyrdom. "Almost never had he complained about his pain, which often must have become dreadful; *he talked only of his idea.*" And on the day of his death, Horst Wessel "with his last strength raised his right arm in salute."⁴⁶ Dr. Joseph Goebbels said of Horst Wessel's death:

"Lift him high, the dead, and show
him to all the people! And shout and shout:
Look what a man!"⁴⁷

The training the Hitler Youth received was consciously designed to displace the religious convictions of its members. A song written in 1935 exhorted:

New Song of the Hitler Youth
We are the joyous Hitler Youth.
We need no Christian virtue,
For our leader is Adolf Hitler.
He is our deliverer and intercessor.
No cleric, no evildoer can hinder us,
for we consider ourselves Hitler-Children.
Not Christ we follow,
but Horst Wessel.⁴⁸

Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 was portrayed as the greatest event in history. The *Machtergreifung* was the event toward which all historical happenings pointed: a secular incarnation. It was impressed upon readers that they were privileged to live in that era.

Germany had fulfilled destiny: she was the nation chosen to consummate the racial revelation. The language of many of the authors, when describing January 30, 1933, was reminiscent of the hosannas that greeted the triumphal entry of a Jewish messiah of a much earlier age.

Turning point in time, turning point of fate, victory of the faith! The years of shame are past. Millions of German hearts inflamed in joy, thanksgiving, jubilation. In the penetrating darkness assembled the old fighters. An endless train, *Sturm* after *Sturm*, SA, SS, political leaders, HJ. The torches flamed. The *Sturm* flags waved. . . .

Germany is awake. And this marvel Hitler has produced alone to the last conclusion, through his love for Germany, his sacred faith, his fanatical will. Heil salutes surged up to him. . . . Never has a statesman been so united with his people.

Bismarck has forged the Reich; Hitler begins in this night, out of the shattered nation to forge the people. Such a day had Germany not experienced since August 1914. 49

The objective of the Nazi movement seemed to have been to recapture the feeling of the first days of World War I in order to renew that conflict.

The Nazi authors briefly interrupted their ecstatic prose to describe the emergency that faced Hitler in January 1933, thus setting the stage for his miracles. Germany was in a state of ruin with factories closed, peasants foreclosed, workers unemployed, the population starved and filled with hate. "The communists and the Jewish agitators were approaching their goal of making out of Germany a land of terror and misery." The pupils were assured that Hitler had saved Germany from this wretchedness by "work and still again work." His list of miracles was impressive: workers obtained "dwellings worthy of human beings, healthful working conditions and convalescent leaves." The multitudes regained "hope and joy in living. . . . Plank for plank the Fuehrer tore apart the *Diktat* of Versailles."50

Hitler was acutely aware of his role and reputation as a miracle worker. He discussed that perception of himself with his own peculiar audacity, as well as with considerable understanding of its implications. "I do not flatter myself that a single man can on this earth work miracles." Such power resided not in individuals but in the "nature-derived and God-derived power of a people." Then Hitler brazenly promised: "This power I will *create*."51 He used the word *erschaffen* (create) rather than *wecken* (awaken) or *starken* (strengthen).

Lest anyone lose his sense of perspective amid the impressive list of Hitler's tangible accomplishments, one text pointed out that "men do not live merely by bread alone."⁵² For the peoples' "spiritual nourishment," the Nazis created numerous holidays modeled after religious observances: January 30 (the taking of power), March Sunday (Memorial Day), April 20 (Hitler's birthday), first Sunday in May (Mothers' Day), June 21 (summer solstice), September (Nuremberg Party Days), October (Thanksgiving Feast), November 9 (Martyrs of the Movement), December (winter solstice and *Weihnachten*).⁵³

Strength Through Joy was an organization that contributed to the "spiritual growth" of the German people through recreation and "complete release of . . . body and spirit."⁵⁴ The inexpensive vacations provided by Strength Through Joy were meager offerings for reviving the spirit of a people. Much more in evidence were the mystical festivals, campfires and symbolic paraphernalia sponsored by Rosenberg and the youth leagues.

Hitler viewed citizenship in the new Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* as

an honor not without religious overtones: "It must be a greater honor to be a streetsweeper and a citizen of this Reich than a king in a foreign state." 55 Such sentiments left no doubt that Hitler was aware of the parallels between his movement and the German religious confessions. He assiduously cultivated such associations and used them to heighten the peoples' expectations and willingness to sacrifice themselves for his ambitions.

In a public address in 1935, Hitler brazenly contributed to the effort to turn himself into a religious figure: "My will that must be our total creed is our belief! My belief is to me exactly as to you everything in this world! But the highest [thing] that God has given me in this world is my folk! In it rests my belief. I serve it with my will, and I give it my life." Then he went a step further: "Just as I am yours, so are you mine. So long as I live, I belong to you and you belong to me." This was neither the first nor the last time that Hitler used the words of Christ: "You are in me and I in you." But his stance as *Retter*, or redeemer, became more pronounced with the passage of time.⁵⁶

Hitler's studied usurpation of religious functions was perhaps a displaced hatred of the Christian tradition: the hatred of an apostate. His political program appeared designed to drown out that alien spirit, just as the monotonous persistence of a steady rainfall extinguishes a forest fire. The incessant use of the "*Heil*" salutation served such a function, as described by Hans-Jochen Gamm: "Inserted in each '*Heil*' was a religious appeal. There is only salvation in union with God, the Most Holy. When this *Heil* was attached through National Socialism solely to the name of a man, then existence took on a new orientation. The Creator-God was

removed from his throne and the man, Adolf Hitler, placed himself there. So it happened in the aftermath that prayers were offered not *for* the Fuehrer but *to* him."⁵⁷

A particularly significant ingredient in Hitler's sense of mission was the yearning to incorporate Austria into Greater-Germany. When reminded that the Austrian *Anschluss* violated the Versailles Treaty, Hitler replied: "When Providence called me out of this state to the leadership of the Reich, then it must have bestowed a commission on me . . . to return my dear homeland to the Reich." After returning to Vienna in triumph, Hitler spoke to two hundred thousand of his former countrymen on the eve of the plebiscite designed to test public reaction to his actions. Seldom did the German Fuehrer speak so deeply of his role in history: "I believe that it was also God's will to send from here a lad into the Reich, to permit him to become great, to elevate him to leader of the nation in order to make it possible to lead the homeland back into the Reich." While stressing

the theme that he was an instrument of Providence, Hitler was careful to warn his listeners that much of the direction of Austria's destiny lay in their own decisions. Another statement demonstrated a theme that ran through Nazi history: Germans must take their destiny into their own hands: "There is a higher determination, and we are all nothing other than its instruments. . . . German people, now stand up, execute it [*unterschreibe es*], hold it firmly in your hands." 58

Thus once more it appeared that the will of Providence emanated from the people; they could dictate its direction, and perhaps they embodied the concept of Providence in its totality. George Kneller concluded that the "religion of National Socialism" consisted of "faith in themselves, their mission, and their own accomplishments." For the Nazis, the folkthe community of bloodwas "the end-all of every divine inspiration." Hitler's rhetoric, according to Wolfgang Hammer, when stripped to its rudiments, amounted to a "fatal mistaken belief in a 'Providence' which was no more than the metaphysical projection of his own wishes and his own greed for power."59

As one who had always been deeply impressed by the grandeur of the Roman Catholic church and even more by its durability, Hitler hinted on more than one occasion that he wished the party to duplicate the church's strength and endurance. Hitler stood in the center of the Nazi movement as a kind of pope.⁶⁰ Nor did his followers shrink from claims that their Fuehrer was also infallible. Goering said: "If the Catholic church has witnessed that the pope is infallible in all religious and ethical things, so we National Socialists declare with similar innermost conviction that also for us

the Fuehrer in all political and other things which concern the national and social interest of the people is plainly as infallible."61

There can be little doubt that the constant harping upon mission, despite its tenuous foundations, deeply impressed Hitler's followers and enormously increased his authority over them. In his book, *Elite für die Diktatur*, Horst Ueberhorst described the effects of the Fuehrer's personality upon the *Jungmannen* of the Napoli (national political institutes established for the racial elite): "Hitler became for the *Jungmannen* and teachers unbelievably fascinating." For their modern-day messiah, the students would "endure any censure" and carry out in his honor "pseudoreligious ceremonies venerating the 'Most Holy' the content of their belief and hope."62

The solemn ceremonies of the Napoli evolved into unabashed worship services honoring the Fuehrer, the symbols of German greatness, and the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. The following liturgy was used in a flagpole ceremony on November 17, 1939:

Entrance of the Institute Flags.

Song: "Only the Free Belong to Our Life"

Words of the Fuehrer:

"In this people we believe,
for this people we fight,
for this people we are, if necessary,
ready as thousands of comrades before us,
to stake ourselves body and soul."

We ask

Lord God, permit us never to waver and
become cowardly.

Permit us never to forget our duty which
we have undertaken!

Departure of *Oraniensteiner Jungmannschaft*.

Be proud, because you are a German youth in whose
hands

a peoples' future lies.

Be proud, because you are the Fuehrer's fighter,
who first conquers himself
and then the world.

Be hard, because you are a German youth,
be hard,

be iron-hard in all things!

because you are our future,

and for that reason you must be hard as iron.

Be loyal, because you are a German youth,
loyal to himself.

Loyal to the model of your ancestors!

Be loyal, because you are the Fuehrer's hope!

Then greet you with consecration

Horst Wessel's sacred flags!

Song: "Let the Flags Wave in the Wind, You Beloved
Comrades!" 63

The educational program of the Napolis underwent a gradual radicalization as the war approached. From 1933 to 1936, religious instruction was permitted at the institutes, but during the war such practices as the confirmation of the *Jungmannen* by Christian churches was officially impeded. Ueberhorst described the change: "The ideological schooling became simultaneous to a continually more vehement challenge to the compassion-ethics of Christianity, which contradicted the Germanic honor- and loyalty-ethic."⁶⁴ In November

1938, the National Socialist Teachers' Union also urged the "immediate cessation" of religious instruction for all students because "we can no longer endure the exaltation of the Jewish criminal folk." 65

In his policy of genocide, Hitler followed to a mind-numbing conclusion one terrible parallel in his conscious or unconscious emulation of an ancient religious community. According to Old Testament accounts, Jehovah commanded His Chosen People to annihilate the inhabitants of Canaan in order to preserve the purity of the Hebrew worship. German schoolchildren read accounts in Heinrich Fischer's book of readings of the ancient Hebrew massacres of the Canaanites, hardly suspecting that at the very moment their own leaders, with icy deliberation, were also exterminating a people whom they considered dangerous to their way of life.

Fischer's book contained an excerpt from a speech given in the English Parliament, which the speaker took from Albert A. Hyamson's *A History of the Jews in England*: "The House was reminded that after 430 years the Jews in Egypt had mustered 600,000 armed men, and that, according to the Book of Esther, when they gained the upper hand in the land of their sojourn, they had 'put to death' in two days 76,000 of those whom they were pleased to call their enemies without either judge or jury."66

The biblical accounts in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua leave little doubt that the Children of Israel attempted to destroy the Canaanites. The following are a few of the divine admonitions given the Hebrews:

But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: [Deut. 20:17]

So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the South, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. [Josh. 10:40]

The reasons for this drastic policy were clearly explained in the Scriptures: the presence of alien groups with idolatrous religious practices would threaten the purity of the Hebrew worship. The following verses clearly reveal this threat:

And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them. [Deut. 7:2]

Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. . . . [Deut. 7:3]

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. [Deut. 7:6]

And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. [Deut. 7:16]

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? [Judg. 2:2]

So absolute was Jehovah's covenant with his people that violators of the most minute provisions were dealt with as contaminated persons. One such "accursed" individual was ordered destroyed so that Israel could stand victorious before her enemies: "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:13). The "accursed thing" (the violator of the covenant) was to be "burnt with fire, he and all that he hath" (Josh. 7:15).

Hitler's "final solution" was a policy of blind hatred, spewing forth from a festering inner pool. He intended to exterminate a people whom he envisioned to be a threat to the existence of the German folk, to cleanse the fatherland.

Hans-Jochen Gamm characterized the drama of the Third Reich as a "cheap tragedy" but one of cosmic dimensions. As a dramatic production, it was flawed by all of the deficiencies of the director and his players.

The world shuddered as the stage manager brilliantly manipulated the production. The result was a perverse fantasy which Gamm likened to Kierkegaard's "sickness unto death." 67

At the very end, during a radio broadcast on April 19, 1945, Dr. Joseph Goebbels pleaded with his listeners to remain faithful, "for the Fuehrer knows his way." (The early Christians also referred to their belief as "the way.") A few days after Goebbels's broadcast, "'the way' of Hitler ended in suicide." The murderer took his own life, and thus "the stage became a cemetery."68

The Nazi history textbooks perceived the existence of a void in the lives of German students. With utmost deliberation, the authors

attempted to fill this void this need for transcendence by substituting the story of their nation's travail for the seemingly bankrupt gospel of traditional faith. The pupils were treated to a gradual unfolding of an exclusive faith: the belief in the racial idea. The duties of the faithful included obeying the harsh demand for total commitment to the cause of the German folk.

Inevitably, the pseudoreligious character of the Nazi movement brought it into direct conflict with that other exclusivist faith: Christianity. Only the defeat of Hitler's Germany in 1945 prevented a struggle to the death between the two: a combat in which the Nazi history textbooks would have been an important weapon against the biblical faith.

Chapter Five

Education for Regeneration: The "New Man" and the "New Woman"

Character-building is the highest aim of education. The means thereto lie at that point where soul and body are joined.

Helmut Stellrecht, *NEUE ERZIEHUNG*

We must educate a new man in order that our people not adopt the typically degenerate symptoms of this new time.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The molding of character was a central concern of National Socialists, and it presupposed certain conditions inherent in their philosophy: the malleability of human personality, the necessity for intervention to ensure a proper outcome of the struggle for existence, and the role of mystical personality as a regenerative element in the life of a people. The function of education in a totalitarian state, according to Rolf Eilers, was to bring up men who would protect the system in the future: "The winning of the youth is identical with the future security of the system. . . . There can be no doubt that the totalitarian system succeeds by means of the youth for which it commits itself." 1

The molding process was viewed much more cynically by some educationists, one of whom was quoted in *Volk und Fuehrer* as saying: "There is no folk in Germany; there is only material for a folk."² That molding was necessary, however, to achieve the proper result was beyond question for the Nazis. In a recent study, Kurt-Ingo Flessau stated that the Nazi ideology was a "positive,

interventionist philosophy" designed to mobilize the individual for the purposes of the state.³ As Joachim Haupt author of *Neuordnung im Schulwesen und Hochschulwesen*, stated: "It's a long step from the liberal to the National Political Educator."⁴

The ideal National Socialist teacher was not a knowledgemonger concerned solely with the intellectual development of pupils; the foremost requirement was his ability to develop personality. But the Nazis drew a sharp distinction between the function of a teacher and that of a university professor, whose position required specialized knowledge. The conventional Nazi definition described a teacher as an individual of "fine character" who would be a "steadfast and enthusiastic leader of children entrusted to him." From the more radical perspective of a militarized society, some National Socialist educators viewed the teacher as a soldier assigned to "the cultural-political front" in the struggle for existence. 5

Responsibility for the proper indoctrination of teachers was laid at the feet of the National Socialist Teachers' Union (NSLB), an organization founded in 1927, six years before Hitler came to power. The NSLB urged teachers to "drink in and assimilate the glories of the German race" and thus to become adherents of the robust, rustic life emerging in Nazi Germany. An attempt was made to relieve teachers of the strictures imposed by subject requirements in order to allow them to instruct in the more generalized field of National Socialist philosophy. This philosophy was not viewed as a subject but as the necessary foundation for instruction in all of the disciplines included in the schools' curriculum.⁶ Germans had been absorbed too long in the abstract studies such as philosophy and poetry, while "other peoples had partitioned the earth between them."⁷ In short, German education was excessively cerebral, and students needed preparation for action.

Adherents of the old system soon complained that the Nazi innovations had set in motion a decline in educational standards. But the Fuehrer, with his low opinion of teachers and his determination to use education for political purposes, thwarted any effort to address these complaints. Remarks made by Hitler during World War II exposed his unenlightened perception of the teacher's role and preparation. He stated on one occasion that former sergeants "could be made teachers at village schools." Brushing aside their academic deficiencies, he insisted that they would make "excellent gymnastic instructors." Furthermore, he denied that teaching required elaborate intellectual training: "There is no need to give these teachers any exaggerated form of training or to stuff their heads till they become stupid with mental indigestion; all that is required is to equip them with just the knowledge that is essential for the elementary schools. A teacher who is destined to spend his life in a village has no need of high academic learning."⁸ Perhaps Hitler merely wished to avoid the sharpening of the teacher's critical faculties which might preclude the character building his regime desired.

The School and the "New Man"

Will was stronger than the German emergency.

VOLK-BEWEGUNG-REICH

The development of character depended, like everything else in Nazi philosophy, upon struggle and conflict. Helmut Stellrecht observed: "Character comes about only through force and counterforce." 9

During their first years in power, the regime's educational theorists made a concerted effort to define the difference between the old and the new schooling. Hans Schemm juxtaposed the two: "A student in the former type of school was ideal when he was well-behaved, industrious, punctual and obedient: if the teacher never had to complain about him. That had become the concept of so-called good school behavior. It was students who never did anything that deviated from the conventional standard." Although Schemm conceded that the student "should understandably be correct," he rejected the earlier ideal. German youth needed "an enterprising air, pluck, I might almost say, self-will, which belongs to something of a sense of adventure, specifically, it belongs to self-initiative."10

The teacher played a paramount role in developing this self-initiative: "He has to mobilize this stormy German urge toward activity, struggle, adventure and enterprise and not impede it." Echoing Nietzsche, Schemm maintained that the former type of school militated directly against those who displayed "Siegfried natures." He compared the old with the new ideal: "We had a *Lernschule* [school for learning] and we desired a *Charakterschule*

[school for character]. We had a school which only mediated knowledge and understanding and did not touch the heart, and we now want to have a school which first trains the character, because we know that when the character and the will are strong, then *Deutschtum* [Germanism] will be mobilized in the children." ¹¹

Ernst Krieck blamed the German collapse in 1918 on the weaknesses of character displayed by the civilian population: "Character is fate: the folk experienced that in World War I." Krieck was convinced that the epitome of character development was the spirit of soldiering. It was "not Weimar, not the Paul's Church of Frankfurt with its poets, philosophers and learned men . . . but the spirit of Prussian militarism, the spirit of manliness, armed strength, breeding, honor, loyalty." ¹² Dietrich Klagges, the foremost designer of historical materials in the Third Reich, identified the goal of heroic education as the developing of "assertive will." "Whoever has the ability to place before the eyes of the youth the deepest emotion, the greatest ardor and the most spirit-stirring power, he is the best teacher." ¹³

In conformity with the tendency of the Nazi philosophy to stress spiritual factors, Helmut Stellrecht maintained that the nation's existence depended not upon "material considerations" (the Marxist theory) but upon "individual traits." The Nazi demands for arms, living space, and material considerations, however, contradicted their claim that spirituality was the locus of Germanic superiority. Nor did they ever make clear whether one's genetic inheritance was material or spiritual. Nevertheless, when Stellrecht discussed the new form of the great German Reich, he envisioned the strength of that new creation as resting in "the higher worth of its men." 14

For the benefit of skeptics who doubted the ability of the schools to recast human personality with facility, Stellrecht assured his readers that "nothing is so hardened that it cannot acquire a new form as soon as the flames heat it and allow it to glow." The Nazi educationists frequently referred to the hardening of character rather than to its development. And frequently the hardening was claimed to follow a spiritually tormenting experience, which shattered an old pattern of the individual's life. Stellrecht credited such traumas with the "arousal of latent genius." 15

For Hitler, as well as for many textbook writers, Frederick the Great was a historical model of the molding of character by the force and passion of conflict. On the surface, the undersized Frederick would hardly appear adequate material for the hardened Nazi racialists. Addicted as a youth to French literature and conversation, and even more surprisingly to flute-playing, the precocious Fritz sought the refuge of his mother as protection from the wrath of his iron-willed father, the famous "Garrison King,"

Frederick William I. "Fritz is an effeminate lad," the father snarled. The crown prince's attempt in late adolescence to flee the garrison kingdom brought the father-son conflict to a point of crisis. The enraged Frederick William ordered his son's companion executed before his eyes and even placed Fritz in prison. This episode became Frederick's "spiritually shocking experience." The authors of *So Ward Das Reich* stated: "That is the turning point. Under the force of this event a man is born out of the youth. Deep repentance engulfs him. . . . Then the father moderates the confinement."16

The Nazi historians falsified Frederick's conversion so that it would better conform to their theory of history. They turned his repentance into a rejection of alien French ways. In reality, Frederick never gave up his love for the philosophy, music, poetry, and learning of the French. *So Ward Das Reich* had Frederick William say of his son: "Fritz should expel all French ways from his mind, be nothing other than Prussian and have a German heart!"17 The authors then cited Frederick's brilliant military career as evidence of the superiority of

his new German ways. But another text correctly related that at his palace at Sanssouci, Frederick spoke French and kept Voltaire for a considerable time as a philosopher-in-residence. Even Frederick's autobiography was in French. 18

Frederick's tenacity in the Seven Years' War (1756-63) endeared him to the Nazis, who admired his ability to stand off a world of enemies. Despite having fought some of the most brilliant campaigns in military history, Frederick was encircled by foes, and it appeared that he would not be able to extricate himself from the impossible situation. After losing at Künersdorf, Frederick wrote to his sister: "My coat is shot through by bullets, two horses were killed under me, my misfortune is that I still live. . . . In the moment that I write this, everybody is fleeing, and I am no longer master of my people. I have no additional means of help, and, not to lie, I believe everything is lost. I will not survive the downfall of my fatherland. Adieu forever." Later that same evening, Frederick dispelled the thoughts of suicide, steeled his resolve, and vowed in a letter to his brother: "Count on this, that so long as I have my eyes open, the state will remain upright as it is my duty."19

Frederick's attitude toward sacrifice and duty also served the Nazis well, as, for example, his statement, "It is not necessary that I live, but rather that I do my duty."20 His habit of rising at 4:00 A.M. (about the time Hitler customarily retired) and his ceaseless toil as "first servant of the state" were virtuous paradigms, supremely compatible with Nazi ideals (if not always with Nazi practice).

The Nazi educationists adopted the political soldier as the personification of the ideal German. It should be no surprise that Hitler's own stormy metamorphosis to political soldier became the

model for character development. As Stellrecht wrote, "The Fuehrer is the foremost example for the development of personality, which the stronger and more deeply imprinted it becomes, still never disrupts the *Gemeinschaft* [community], but only elevates it." It was not the struggle for power but "the struggle for the higher form" which was the most important lesson of Adolf Hitler's own fight and "the secret of his development."²¹

The German interior minister, Dr. Wilhelm Frick issued a decree on May 9, 1933, entitled "Goals of Struggle of the German Schools," which established educational guidelines. The product of the school system, according to Frick, should be "the political man who is rooted in all thought and action to serving and sacrificing for his people" and who is "deeply committed to the history and the fate of his state." In short, the interior minister called for the rearing of a "new type of man correctly proportioned in body and soul."²²

The Spartan ideal also influenced the Nazi concept of upbringing.

In ancient Sparta the training of youth preempted family life. Not only was Sparta the first society that believed in eugenics; it also glorified death and maintained a city wall whose building blocks were the toughened bodies of its manhood. As a land power, Sparta reared its youth to hardship, especially to the unflinching endurance of pain. Likewise, Hitler once remarked that the best protection for Germany was not its fortress walls but "the living wall of men and women, filled with the highest love of country and with fanatical enthusiasm." 23 The Fuehrer stated succinctly on another occasion that his goal was a youth as "hard as Krupp steel, tough as leather, and swift as a greyhound."24

World War I left an indelible imprint upon the minds of the former front fighters, and that contest to a remarkable degree determined their attitude toward character development. All of the textbooks covered the military campaigns of the Great War in detail, as well as its impact upon the lives of the men who fought it. Readers of the school textbooks were told that leadership was born in battles such as Verdun and the Somme. "In the shell-torn fields of the Somme and at Verdun [the soldier] learned to forget his own person and experience the deep sense of comradeship." One's class and position counted for nothing at the front, where a primitive democracy of hardship existed and where the worth of a man depended upon his bravery and helpfulness as a comrade. It was no accident that the government of the Third Reich strove to recapture that sense of mass democracy experienced in the trenches. "Here the men were formed who would later build the new Germany."25

The trenches cannot be overestimated as a reservoir of ideas for the education of youth. Horst Ueberhorst stated that the "horror of the

battles of material and the forcible immersion into a world of death and annihilation transformed the enthusiastic war volunteers into hard . . . pitiless front fighters, because this struggle took on the character of a battle of fate [*Schicksalskampf*]."26 Hitler's own participation in these horrors of fire and steel although insignificant when viewed in the broader context of the war was portrayed in the textbooks as a model of service and devotion. While others sought safety, Corporal Hitler, as a *Meldegänger* (dispatch runner), was compelled to "go through hails of iron and sheets of fire, through smoke and fumes."27 His reward was the coveted Iron Cross (first and second class).

The success of enemy propaganda in the World War taught the Nazis two graphic lessons: the ability of a government consciously to mold thought and the inability of citizens, even the German *Herrenvolk*, to fend off its deadly influence. One text stated that enemy propaganda converted the World War into a struggle "against

the Kaiser and 'militarism.'" Internal foes (Jews, Freemasons, Marxists, liberals, and Catholic politicians) "fought side by side with the enemy alliance against the German front." 28 Hitler had no use for a government that tolerated such treason.

Nazi historians drew more lessons from events surrounding the war's conclusion than from perhaps any other historical episode. Most of these lessons indicted the people who remained at home, behind the front. Although the war could "no longer . . . be won," the collapse of the Reich "need not have come. . . . No people is lost so long as it does not give up." The Nazis adamantly clung to the view that their nation could have been saved through the force of a personality. "To be sure, now in the twelfth hour, a real leader at the top must summon the entire people to the last sacrifice [and] eradicate the internal damages with iron energy."29

The Nazis never forgave those responsible for ending the war in 1918. Nor did many of the soldiers who participated in that great ordeal ever demobilize psychologically: "With gritting teeth, hunger, delirium, they did their duty, without hope, without question. . . . Many a one sought death upright because he would not live a life of shame. . . . The group had become a comradeship in life and death. Leader and followers were one. They knew they received no rest; they knew they stood alone."30 In the spirit of Ernst Jünger, the German war novelist, they were fighters for fighting's sake.

The sentiments of self-pity and hope intermingled in the textbooks' treatment of the end of the war: "In all of the enemy lands victory bells rang. . . . From the skyscrapers of New York rained confetti to the streets below as in carnival time. In Germany the desolate

clamor of communist bands charged in the streets of the great cities. The others milled about in silent confusion to clutch the stunning fate. Some individuals put an end to their lives because they did not want to live among dishonorable people."³¹

Self-pity turned to hatred and contempt sentiments which marked the attitude of the Nazis toward the German civilian population to the end. The Social Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* expressed a viewpoint that infuriated the Nazis and demonstrated that Hitler's bands fought not only against Germany's former foes but also against "those kinds of people." *Vorwärts* said: "It is our firm will that Germany should strike its war flags forever without having to return home victorious with them for the last time."³² Never as long as they drew breath would the rightist veterans willingly pack away those treasured campaign banners. Battle lines were drawn for a civil war; the Nazis would first have to conquer Germany before revenging their former foes.

The head of the phoenix was already protruding through the ashes of total defeat and despair. Former soldiers who had once "yearned for peace" now "did not want to become citizens" because they hated "this world of acquisitions, this world of idle contemplativeness. . . . Their life remained struggle. . . . Germany collapses . . . but men fight, out of whose blood the new Reich will one day arise." Some men found their *Kampf* in Free Corps units, which gave them the opportunity to play at being soldiers. Field Marshal von Hindenburg explained his own decision to remain at the helm of the army even in a disgraced country as an example to the nation: "I am dead tired, but I will stand until I collapse, just as long as the old body is still somewhat good as an example." 33

Albert Leo Schlageter was the clear choice of the Nazis as the model of character from the immediate postwar period. The peasant's son from the Black Forest attempted to return to a life of books (contemplation) after the war, but "it was not possible for him to sit over books to think of his own livelihood while Germany bled from a thousand wounds." Schlageter chose action in the Free Corps over study, a choice highly esteemed by the Nazis. Schlageter's unit fought the Russian communists in Lithuania until the Reich government ordered them out of the area. "In this hour they rejected this state [Weimar Germany] which had taken everything from them: hope, belief, bread. 'There behind us, that is no longer Germany; Germany is here where we fight.'" Some of the Free Corpsmen lived long enough to renew the fight against the Russians in 1941, but a martyr's grave claimed Schlageter long before the Nazi legions plunged into the Soviet Union. Other irreconcilables died fighting in Hitler's brown battalions. Hitler

said: "It was hard necessity which we took in hand, and wise Providence denied us the outcome at the time."³⁴

The school textbooks urged the Nazi youth to emulate the character of the early brown fighters, who became the stereotype for character development in Nazi Germany. Their character was tempered in street brawls in the early days when they stoutly opposed the "conspiracy against Germanism." "In 1928 Freemasons, Jews and the Roman Catholic church concluded an alliance in Aachen" for the purpose of breaking the "mighty growing brown danger. . . . Then murder stalked the streets. Out of the dark street corners, out of the dormer windows clutched revolvers, in the hallways the dagger was poised. One brown fighter after another sank to the ground. Continually Adolf Hitler must step to the bedside of one . . . who died that Germany might live. But the Roman priests denied the dead a church burial. It is just another of the 'pests of National Socialism.'"³⁵ Once the National Socialists came to power, they

institutionalized this character model, which had sustained them and fired their imaginations during the *Kampfzeit*.

According to Ernst Krieck, the state became the "training master . . . the fashioner of proper and indigenous social life and behavior." Krieck claimed that the evils of selfishness and egoism could be overcome only by deliberate intervention. In the National Socialist state, intervention necessitated an elaborate educational ladder, which "never left the individual to himself alone." "Education begins," Stellrecht said, "when the youngest National Socialist stands on the street . . . in uniform." 36

The ideal Nazi upbringing was spelled out for the youth in both the teachers' manuals and the history textbooks. The authors of *So Ward Das Reich* related in elaborate detail the proper progression to adulthood:

The education of the National Socialist begins even in childhood. The mother is in the "*Frauenschaft*," the father in the SA or SS. There they hear how their child should be reared. In the community school he comes to know the Fuehrer. When he is ten years old, he comes as a *Pimft* into the *Jungvolk* or as a *Jungmädel* into the BdM [League of German Girls]. On trips and in camps he tempers his strength and learns comradeship. Soon he is ready for the Hitler Youth. Enthusiastically he will join. Again camps, long trips, evenings in the country. How proud he is when he can take part in the long march to Nuremberg. There he sees the Fuehrer; there he hears his words: "You must exercise the virtues today which people need when they become grown; you must be loyal; you must be courageous; you must be gallant; and you must build among yourselves a single, great magnificent comradeship! For you, my young ones, you are the living Germany of the future, not an empty idea, no mere scheme, but you are blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh, spirit of our spirit, you are

our people continuing to live. . . . Then take with you this sacred confession, that our German people again today are fulfilled and you are the youngest witness of this! Take out of here this faithful oath, that at no time in the future will the German people be divided among themselves, at no time disintegrated, but that it really will be one people of brothers that through no emergency and no danger can ever be separated."³⁷

After his presence at the oracle at Nuremburg, the child entered the Labor Service to work with the peasants in their fields: "Here

the German youth learns by doing: 'The individual is nothing, the people is everything.' Magnificent is the comradeship which binds all together. Here one knows no distinction between class and confession, wealth and poverty and school ties. Here all Germans are comrades." Nazi education pointed unmistakably to military service, which was the culmination of the instructional process and the beginning of learning. In the armed forces the young German experienced "the highest pride of the man: to defend folk and fatherland with weapon in hand." Then he returned to the movement. "Now he can vote. The SA takes him in." 38 His education was complete he had arrived at the goal. (For the German woman, the goal was not reached so soon.) This progression tended to confirm the charge that National Socialism was essentially a juvenile ideology, which enjoyed its greatest acceptance by adolescent males. Certainly for several million German males, life did not progress far beyond the years of adolescence.

The very core of the movement's educational program was the preparation for war, and when war resumed, it was conducted in a manner compatible with the ideals of Nazi upbringing. At the outset of World War II, Hitler's remarks were quoted as an example of the proper attitude to take into the fight: "As a National Socialist and a German soldier I enter this fight with a strong heart! . . . One word I have never learned; it is called: capitulation!" 39

For a time the war went well, and it appeared that the alterations made in German character by the Nazis would see them to victory. Therefore, the history textbooks exploited Hitler's flattery of the German soldier to the fullest: "Over roads without foundation, over blown-up streets, over rocky slopes and broken bridges, through

mountain-high passes and over barren rocks this victorious march had moved in hardly three weeks to liquidate the war in two states. Concerning this campaign in the Balkans one can write only one sentence: 'For the German soldier nothing is impossible!'"⁴⁰

Few lessons in character development were drawn from the Russian campaign, and there appeared little enthusiasm to go beyond 1942 in the coverage of the war.

Another war was under way, one with carnage whose dimensions very few people knew. This other war the war to annihilate the European Jew tested the character of the Nazi elite to the fullest. Heinrich Himmler remained convinced that his black-shirted SS battalions had performed that horrendous assignment and yet had "remained decent." Himmler said: "This is a glorious page in our history that has never been written and never shall be written." His final tribute to his men was an accolade which was more a wish than a fact: "We have suffered no damage from it in our inner self,

in our soul, in our character." 41 Himmler's delusion is a fitting epitaph to memorialize the folly of Nazi educators.

National Socialism and Youth

Youth is always right, because it sees things in an unspoilt manner without inner check. For it, every "yea" is not fraught with a "but" or "however."

Joseph Goebbels, *WESEN UND GESTALT DER NATIONALSOZIALISMUS*

In sponsoring a youth movement, the Nazis faced another conflict between aspects of their philosophy: the tension between spontaneity and authority. Dr. Goebbels's suggestion that "unspoiled youthful enthusiasm" was an infallible guide did not explain why it was necessary to organize the Youth Movement so thoroughly. The Nazi political theorists and educational authorities continued to grapple with this contradiction until the end of the war. For example, George Usadel lauded such qualities as activism, vitalism, and heroic realism, but he never explained how such "animating life-interests and inner drives" could thrive when they were shackled within a regimented structure.⁴²

George Kneller expressed doubt that National Socialism could have succeeded "had it not offered an answer to youthful idealism by its accent on instinct, naturalism, Promethean activity, and utopianism." Kneller pointed out the similarity between Nazi romanticism and Stefan George's concept of the community as an "exclusive circle."⁴³

The movement of multitudes into the large industrial centers in the latter half of the nineteenth century produced two opposite results: unprecedented prosperity and, among the youth, a revulsion toward

materialistic values. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the storm of youthful protest gathered such elemental force that a major generational division resulted, and the *Wandervögel*, which brought a new wave of irrationalism and emotionalism in its wake, was created.⁴⁴

The *Wandervögel* not only tapped the traditional reservoir of radical protest but also the reactionary philosophies of Wagner, Lagarde, and Chamberlain, all of whom raised their voices against liberalism and Jewry. In the process of exploiting the antimaterialism of the Youth Movement, the Nazis misrepresented its purposes. Its members came across in the texts as practically identical with the Nazis themselves. As one text explained: "They wanted a new 'folk state' in which German was the brother of German, and a new Reich, that really encompassed all Germans, as far as they spatially lived together, and a new division of earthly goods . . . a large, pure, beautiful Germany." These bands of young idealists became the

leadership of new Germany, as soon as a "greater leader called them out of their dreaming to deeds and actions." 45

Viewing the generational schism from another vantage point, Cecilia Bason unmasked the dilemma of the youth poised "between two worlds, the world of the Spirit and the world of Power," that is, between the traditions of Goethe and Bismarck. Members of the Youth Movement viewed the feverish growth of the Bismarckian power state as a threat to the spirit of *Innigkeit*, or quiet inwardness, which traditionally marked German cultural and artistic creations. The threat of inner poverty and shallowness in the presence of material abundance drove the pre-World War I youth to establish subcultures in order to keep alive their own values.⁴⁶ The various youth movements began to merge, and their energies were increasingly expended in a desperate search for new authority even dictatorial control. The experience of the war of 1914-18 destroyed the naive idealism of the *Wandervögel*, but at the same time accentuated its members' thirst for authority. The Hitler Youth and the SA bands filled the yearning for authority in the lives of countless youngsters after 1918.⁴⁷

More than perhaps any other National Socialist thinker, Alfred Baeumler exalted the warrior band as the highest, most genuine form of community life. In Baeumler's developmental concept of life, youth was the heroic stage of man. He urged the schools not to engage in civic education or citizenship training but rather to strive to implant the image of "man standing by man as in battle array." Baeumler's view precluded the education of private persons because "private persons cannot march." It was through the avenue of the soldierly life, according to Kneller, that National Socialism

"invaded the spirit of the Youth Movement and substituted its own ideals."⁴⁸

To tap youthful élan for educational ends and to organize it for political purposes without dissipating its force presented a fundamental dilemma. The Nazi solution was to chain the volatile force of youth to the Fuehrer's charismatic authority. Karl Friedrich Stürm wrote: "Honor is everything, and with it are bound silent obedience, courage, and unquestioning loyalty. This youth swears to know no other will than the will of the Leader, and no greater loyalty than loyalty to him and his standard."⁴⁹

The textbook accounts of Hitler's youth contained many of the conflicts present in the Nazi philosophy, revealing both his blind obedience to the symbols of German greatness and his rebellion against authority. The students were told that as a lad Hitler "learned easily without being a model pupil."⁵⁰ (Does this remark suggest that he was intelligent but earned poor marks?) On the birthday of the Habsburg emperor, young Hitler and some of his classmates sang

"Germany, Germany Over All" rather than the Habsburg anthem, "God Preserve, God Protect Our Kaiser and Country." 51 Most of the authors gave a prominent place to Hitler's conflict with his father. A customs official who had risen above the poverty of a cotten's son, Alois Hitler insisted that Adolf follow his footsteps into officialdom. "But the lad, who enjoyed so much tramping in the forests and fields with his older agemates, shuddered before the thought of having to link his life to an office atmosphere behind documents." The boy persisted in his "preference for the freer life of an artist, and he refused to allow himself to be persuaded to the contrary."52

The intellectual aridity of Nazi textbooks can be seen in the numerous stories of petty brawls which were crowded between their covers. Similar versions of the following episode appeared in several texts as an obvious appeal to adolescents. The story described the fracas in which forty-six of Hitler's security guards were christened "Storm Troopers" after reportedly ejecting eight hundred Marxists from an assembly hall.

When Hitler entered the Hofbrauhaus he immediately sensed the danger. Only a forty-six-man assembly hall guard contingent stood at his disposal. . . . "I put before the youths that they must truly remain loyal today . . . do or die, and that none of us could leave the assembly hall other than they carry us out dead." . . . The rally began. Hitler spoke as usual from a table. There was wild heckling. The voices became continually more agitated. Suddenly, a Marxist sprang on a stool and bellowed: "Freedom!" And now beer mugs flew through the hall, stool legs crackled, truncheons whistled. But then already order again. . . . In twenty-five minutes they had thrown the enemy out of the hall, though bleeding from many wounds themselves.53

Many of Hitler's educational ideals revealed a bias toward the laziness of youth. They were the sentiments of one who detested both school and teachers, and who, after a quarter of a century, had the opportunity to turn the tables on the professors who failed to recognize his gifts. His ideas were remarkably ossified. His monumental resentment against educators came close to wrecking one of the world's foremost educational systems.

The Image and Education of the German Female

The German people will acknowledge their indebtedness to the pure, biologically sound and fecund German family . . . and will accordingly observe

the day as a day of honor to the German mother as the preserver and nurse of a proud progeny. Our schoolchildren should understand the responsible task to which they are called as future bearers of a typical German family life, and learn again to honor the mothers of our people and serve them with gratitude.

Decree for Mother's Day Observance, April 18, 1934

The stewards of National Socialism contended that all living organisms existed in a state of siege. A host of enemies threatened to obliterate German superiority, and the family stood as a militant alliance to protect the genetic depository of the race from the encroachments of a hostile environment. The Nazis continually paid homage to the family but primarily because of its biological function. The official importance accorded motherhood notwithstanding, the Nazis in practice minimized the importance of the family and subordinated it to the exclusive male band with its virile camaraderie.

Hitler himself exhibited all of the characteristics of modern *déclassés* orphaned, urbanized, uprooted, and cynical. Perhaps it was inevitable that he adhered to the functional and utilitarian concept of the family, an institution with which he was ill-acquainted. Nevertheless, his ideology sprang from far more than the circumstances of his own upbringing; it was based on his personal and visceral conviction that life was a ceaseless struggle to stave off annihilation.

Although Hitler believed that nature intended the family to be the "acme of happiness," he reasoned that the institution did not exist for "mutual entertainment." As everything else in Hitler's Reich, the family fulfilled a deadly serious mission: the husband fighting

for a livelihood and the wife maintaining the home as a fortress from which to wage the fight for existence. 54

Most authors have assumed that National Socialists limited their perception of womanhood to the traditional four K's: *Küche*, *Kleider*, *Kinder*, and *Kirche* (cooking, clothes, children, and church).⁵⁵ And Nazi officials themselves frequently reinforced such an interpretation. Dr. Frick suggested that "the social role of women" should revolve around children and the family and that "unmarried females should only be dependent upon those callings which correspond with the womanly disposition."⁵⁶

Another image appeared on the pages of their history texts, however, one at variance with the traditional German woman. The ideal National Socialist woman had much more in common with the Spartan woman of antiquity than with the gentle German *Hausfrau*. Like her counterpart in ancient Sparta, she was expected to bear with unusual fortitude the stresses of life. The famous stoic courage that enabled a mother to demand that her son seek death in battle rather than accept the disgrace of retreat was wholly compatible with

the Nazi educational ideals. The Nazi mother (especially of an SS man) could have said as easily as the Spartan mother: "Come back with your shield or on it." Frau Gertrude Klink penned an appropriate admonition for mothers of slain German warriors: in such circumstances a mother should say, "I didn't want him different." 57

In 1926, Gregor Strasser, a party leader in the Berlin *Gau*, suggested to Hitler that motherhood be rewarded by such political privileges as a multiple vote and that childbirth be equated with compulsory military service for males. Hitler agreed in principle but rejected Strasser's proposal as "excessive compensation" for a "natural duty." Nevertheless, the literature of the period repeated a none too subtle equation of the two duties. Strasser would have delayed full citizenship until a female bore children, just as a male was recognized as fully a man only after military service. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler came close to agreeing with this conclusion: "The German girl is a subject and becomes a citizen only when she marries. But the right of citizenship can also be granted to female German subjects active in economic life."⁵⁸ The latter condition appeared to be either an afterthought or an unavoidable political concession to single women.

The rigid separation of males and females in different spheres of life and the subsequent limitations placed upon women could have stemmed, in part, from Hitler's Catholic heritage from old Austria. His categorization of life according to ideal and function bore the unmistakable imprint of Aristotelian dualism. Hitler anticipated no struggle between the sexes "so long as each fulfills those tasks nature has established for it to do."⁵⁹

In most respects instruction for females followed the same pattern and logic as that for males, the prime example being the heavy emphasis upon physical training for both. The qualities composing good character were also similar for both sexes: courage, willpower, physical attainment, and readiness to serve the folk. Even the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the girls' counterpart of the Hitler Youth, arose, according to Trude Burkner, out of the desire of girls to "emulate their brothers."⁶⁰

The proper relationship of woman to man was explored in some depth by Helmut Stellrecht. He rejected the notion that a woman must "know how to read Schiller and Goethe" and "speak a few lines of French" in order to "satisfy a man." Stellrecht reminded his readers that Goethe himself chose for a wife the modestly endowed Christiane Volpius rather than the more erudite Frau von Stein ("and one cannot say of Goethe that he knew nothing of life"). Stellrecht continued: "No, a man certainly does not desire that his wife understand only what is a scaled-down model of his own world. When he must take up seriously the things of life of his nature, perhaps

too seriously take them up, then he seeks . . . with his wife the compromise, the gratuity of relaxation of the things lighter, more serene and joyous." A woman's traits were gifts of nature and not the results of "so-called education," which, in fact, could cause their diminution. When a man says that he covets relaxation with a wife, "he seeks with her that which he himself does not have. What he possesses in the strongest measure is not valuable to him in his wife." 61

Although Stellrecht insisted that gender differentiation originated in the race (biological determinism), his apprehension that the German female would "reject the world of the home" and thereby quickly "lose something of herself" unwittingly betrayed a radically different conclusion (voluntarism). Improper training could apparently distort a woman's nature and weaken her perception of herself. Hence the female's education should be limited to the "spiritual world of her nature." Stellrecht added, "But she will not grasp it first from the scientific but from the artistic."62

Attitudes similar to Stellrecht's held by those high in the educational establishment of National Socialist Germany undoubtedly contributed to the sharp reduction in the number of women in teaching positions. With the exception of the pedagogical institute in Hanover, the Nazis abolished teacher education for women. Consequently, between 1931 and 1936 the number of women in institutions of higher learning declined by more than half, from 21,300 to 10,300. (There was a less drastic overall decline in the number of students engaged in higher learning.)63

Women were barred from political activity and from occupying any

position that "deprived a man of employment." Officials of the Reich attempted to render the subordinate role of females more palatable by shrouding it with mysticism. The woman, according to Dr. Auguste Reber-Gruber, should perform such tasks as singing "intimate German lullabies" and telling "treasured German folktales" to children in the "still and silent hours." Frau Reber-Gruber insisted that motherhood was not taught but "awakened within the girl's soul." Such inborn feelings as the desire to reproduce "slumber within every girl." As if to reassure German women of their worth, Frau Reber-Gruber declared that the influence of the woman on the man was a recognized historical principle. As the consort of man, the woman "fructifies" his work, bringing to the union her own more delicate feminine influence.⁶⁴

Given the Nazi fascination with the early Greeks, surveying the Nazi interpretation of the relationship of the gods in the ancient Greek religion gives insight into the roles the Nazis prescribed for the sexes. Zeus was the "undisputed master" in the old Indo-Ger-

manic religion; he imposed order and demanded adherence to absolute law but was without a "special priestly caste." Likewise, Hera, the mate of Zeus, was "the model Grecian wife and mother." Together the two figures possessed and symbolized the necessary qualities for Germanic civilization: perfection, proportion, order, purity, and mental acumen. 65

Specific mention of females and their role in the history textbooks contrasted starkly with the predominantly masculine content of these works. But certain historical facts necessitated brief allusions to the contributions of women to German life. Surprisingly, the Nazi historians were not averse, in the face of masculine weakness, to elevating females to roles of strength normally reserved for males. 66

The schoolchildren were told that in the early Germanic period, the "free peasant was master of his freehold ('Odal') and . . . of the members of the household." 67 In those days the female's importance centered around her function as guardian of the sacred flame, which warmed and lighted the household. The woman's role was described in *Ewige Strasse*, which devoted only two paragraphs to the role of women in ancient times: "She ground the corn in the stone hand-mill and baked round, flat bread in the walled oven. She guarded, in addition to the fire, the light in the hanging oil lamp. . . . To the woman's realm also belonged pottery." Women also spun and wove all articles of clothing. "While the right hand rotated the distaff, the left pulled the wool or flax . . . and twisted it adroitly into threads." 68 One textbook proudly quoted from Tacitus the glowing tribute to the purity of the German

marriage ties: "There [in Germany] no one considers vice a joking matter."⁶⁹

On occasion, ancient German women displayed a ferocity equal to that of the men. One textbook related that when the men lost a battle to the Romans, the women "stabbed knives into their breasts because they did not want to fall into the hands of the Romans."⁷⁰ Other historians simply cast women in the role of Eve: women as a bad influence upon men. In the case of the Frankish King Chlodwig, students were told that his wife influenced him to become a Christian, the first Germanic king to condescend to that "alien spirit."⁷¹

Only two females were consistently singled out for inclusion in the biographical gallery of the histories: Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and Queen Louise of Prussia. But neither of these women conformed to the stereotyped ideal of womanhood advocated by Nazi educationists, nor did either play a subordinate role to men. Significantly, both eclipsed the males around them in the qualities required for statecraft.

In the case of Maria Theresa, the authors of one text wasted no time in dispelling the belief that a "weak woman" could not survive

the rough-and-tumble of great power relations. A rival to the Habsburg throne, the elector of Bavaria, confronted this "woman with a virile heart." 72 The Nazi authors recounted with enthusiasm her spirited defense of the realm in the face of an unprecedented threat from Frederick II of Prussia. Responding with "proud contempt" to a request from the Prussian ambassador in Vienna, Maria Theresa said: "Go back to your Lord and say to him, that as long as a single one of his soldiers stands in Silesia, one has nothing to say to him." Any doubt about a woman's ability to conduct the affairs of a great power should have been removed by the description of Maria Theresa's cabinet sessions: "She sat day after day into the night together with the ministers and generals; questioned, calculated, ordered, and she, the young brave woman, plucked out the faintheartedness of all of the men. . . . 'We are in the right, God protects the right. God will not abandon us.' That was her creed."73

To the great Frederick, Maria Theresa proved a formidable adversary. When her generals languished in defeat, she roused them with stirring words: "Hold on, and if you succumb, I will thus take upon myself the responsibility." She clearly emerged as the driving will and the steadying influence that saved the Habsburg monarchy. The empress possessed the qualities Nazis generally reserved for statesmen. "I lament the fate of you all, which I unhappily cause; and this is perhaps my greatest pain, but you will at least find in me a thankful heart." As a true heroine, Maria Theresa struggled for seven years against the cruel efficiency of the Prussian war machine, and although never able to prevail decisively over Frederick, she remained "until her death . . . sorrowing as a mother for her country."74

One of the curious aspects of almost all of the Nazi histories was the preoccupation with death, including morbid and laborious details. Recounting the details of death, especially of the coveted *Heldentod*, or heroic death, became a powerful influence in character building. Maria Theresa's death was surveyed in such detail, even in a *Klasse-I* text:

"She died as bravely as she had lived. When death approached, her children attempted to persuade her to sleep, but she said: 'I want to experience death.' And when it really came, she was, as she desired to face it: she raised herself and took some steps through a room; then she collapsed on a couch. When one asked her whether she rested comfortably, the answer was: 'Well enough for dying.' Her last wish was that the priest rather than her son close her eyes because to him it would be too painful."⁷⁵

An even more engrossing and romantic feminine model was Queen Louise of Prussia, wife of Frederick William III. Stellrecht concluded in his educationist tract that the irrepressible queen personified the womanly qualities which the regime sought to inculcate in the schools. "When one becomes acquainted with her through her words and letters, one must measure her by the forms of the classical German period, which she represented perhaps at its strongest in Prussia." 76 The queen's life held still another fascination for National Socialist historians: her defiant attitude kept the Prussian spirit alive after the Napoleonic humiliations in 1805 and 1806 (just as the Nazis fanned the flames of revenge against France a century later). Nazi historians did not hesitate to cast the queen in a role of strength vis-à-vis the Prussian king. In fact, a pathetically embarrassing portrait of the irresolute Frederick William emerged from the texts:

The king was happy that Napoleon left him in peace. But Louise saw through the French; she vainly assailed the king; he should think of Prussia's honor and fight before it was too late. It happened as she had feared. Prussia must finally indeed go to war but now alone, without allies. At Jena and Auerstadt the Prussian army was devastatingly struck down. Queen Louise, who had accompanied the king in war, had to flee as quickly as possible. 77

The queen made her escape in the dead of winter despite a serious illness; she fled to the farthest reaches of the kingdom to evade the grasp of the French emperor. "He had reviled the queen as a warmonger [a fact which endeared her all the more to the Nazis] and put up offensive posters about her in the streets of Berlin." In the face of Napoleon's overwhelming power, the queen's uninterrupted defiance compounded her difficulties. She advised

her husband: "For God's sake no shameful peace." Prussia should "at least not go down without honor." The Nazi youth were told that in this time of dire emergency, all good people in the land looked with hope toward a feminine will, "knowing that she would steadfastly love them in their misery."⁷⁸

When the peace negotiations began in Tilsit, Napoleon treated Frederick William shabbily, and in desperation the Prussian king wrote to Louise, requesting that she come to Tilsit. The king hoped that "her presence" might put Napoleon in a "more relaxed mood" and thus ease the stringent peace demands. "When the queen read that, she wept bitterly, for it was the most difficult thing which she could conceive." She would only do it for "her Prussia." But the

queen "did not allow herself to be intimidated; she answered with pride and with veracious, royal bearing: 'Sire, on the laurels of Frederick the Great it was permitted us to be deceived about our power, though we have really deceived ourselves!' " 79 The queen's demeanor and responses made a deep impression upon Napoleon.

Queen Louise's behavior in the face of impotence and seemingly irrevocable defeat served as a constant source of inspiration to the Nazis during their own travails. They especially applauded her stern advice to her eldest sons as they took up arms against the French in the Wars of Liberation (1813/14). Though still adolescents, "they were already old enough to understand everything." "In the end the queen gazed at her sons with the most grave expression and admonished them to be capable and brave men, which shame could not again overcome." The king had dropped out of the picture during this episode, and the queen attempted to pour steel into the spines of the two fledgling warriors:

Actdevelop your strength and free your people from the degradation in which it languishes; seek to reconquer the presently blackened glory of your forefathers. Be men and strive after the glory of great field commanders and heroes. . . . But if you cannot in spite of all of your strivings raise up again the humbled state, then seek death!⁸⁰
[Come back with your shields or on them!]

The lesson should not have been lost upon German students that the honor of Prussia was defended by a woman. By Nazi standards, she should have left statecraft to men. Remarkably for a National Socialist textbook, the authors admitted that "increasingly large numbers of the people rallied around the queen." Only by degrees

did the king take "courage and trust in his people." Unfortunately, the brave queen would not live to see the consummation of her dreams. As the following account indicated, women could experience their own *Heldentod*: "Seriously ill, she died in her Mecklenberg homeland. But in the hearts and on the lips of each one of the people she lived on, and when the French finally went out of the land, she was the good genius of the entire nation."⁸¹

Because modern warfare took men away for long periods of time, it created important tasks for women who remained behind. The industrial capacity required for mechanized warfare accentuated the importance of machine operators, some of whom were women. Women were simultaneously compelled to bear up under the weight of economic privation and the horrendous casualties among their menfolk. The textbooks paid homage to the tenacity of women and introduced the inevitability of such sacrifices as part of their obligation

to the fatherland. One text applauded the great sacrifices of mothers and wives (although the first mention of women in that work was on page 104):

They sacrificed husband, son, fiancé; many mothers had also relinquished their last son. While she worried about the one at the front, she took courageously in hand alone the upbringing of the children. She provided for their nourishment and denied herself in order to provide them the most urgent necessities. Just as the men rushed to the colors, so did the young girls to the registration offices of the Red Cross in order to become hospital nurses. . . . Thus the German woman had become a comrade in the best sense. 82

Undoubtedly, the most stressful aspect of woman's role in war was the spiritual emergency it produced: "Hourly they thought of their loved ones in danger of death in the war; weeks and months long each one often remained without news; many received the short communication: 'Fallen for Fatherland' or 'Missing in Russia.' In spite of all suffering and all sacrifices the will of the German people remained unbroken."83

For Hitler, World War I was never terminated for men or for women. Hence in his political movement, woman's roles of sacrificing and suffering continued. When speaking before female audiences, he lauded their steadfastness in the party's time of struggle. A consummate flatterer, he attributed their refusal to admit defeat to an innate power of perception inaccessible to men: "Their power of instinct so clearly demonstrated its superior strength and accuracy." Men often suffered from an "oversubtle mind," which, according to Hitler, diminished their ability to persevere in the face of overwhelming opposition.84

Men were swayed by "seemingly intellectual arguments," and it was at just such times that "there awakens in woman her inherent instinct for self- and national preservation. Woman proved to us in those days that her aim is sure."⁸⁵ (Was it not also only women who lingered around the cross after the crucifixion of Christ, as the panic-stricken disciples fled?)

During the *Kampfzeit*, mothers of SA men and Hitler Youth received the same sad news that their counterparts received in war-time, and ideally they bore it with the same stoic resolve. In the account of a Hitler Youth's murder ("The Heroic Death of a German Worker-Youth"), the mother emerged as a stronger figure than the males. After four weeks of frightful suffering and pain, the boy acknowledged his impending death: "Mama, don't cry! I know that

"I must die for Hitler." When the lad's comrades went to comfort his mother, she did the consoling:

At the sight of this poor worker's wife, who already had sacrificed to the fatherland her husband in the Great War, tears came to us. Still the woman is stronger than we. 'My Werner does not want it' [mourning], she said to us. We pulled ourselves together . . . amazed by the greatness of this woman. 86

In one of his fanatical speeches, Hitler bellowed: "Lord God, lay not the entire future of the nation upon the mothers!" The Fuehrer reported a certain woman's remarks following the German army's entrance into Paris: "Millions of times a single woman must have fought her fight in order that her son can gain by force this victory of millions." And Stellrecht asked: "Has not the German mother first of all prevailed in this fight over the French mother?"⁸⁷

One German mother submitted a letter from her recently deceased son to a publication of the Napoli elite school from which he had graduated. In the letter the young man succinctly summarized the prevalent Nazi concept of womanhood:

"We are aware that along with us you women help win the war. No word of your own sorrow or your own pain comes across your lips . . . you are the silent bearers of eternal perseverance. It is you who allow us to fight bravely here. . . . I cannot be thankful enough to you, most beloved mother, that you have made me what I am today: an upright soldier, devotedly true to you and to the Fuehrer it is likewise in death."

The letter was signed, "Heil Hitler! Your Young Man."⁸⁸

The extent of Nazi success in convincing German womanhood to stay at home toiling, worrying, sacrificing, and ultimately giving up

their treasured family relations, while at the same time frequently digging their homes and possessions out of rubble, cannot be determined by studying the history that National Socialists wrote. There is evidence that among a select group of the most loyal Nazi women, they achieved a remarkable degree of adherence to their philosophy. But the experience after 1945 suggests that the campaign to refashion the character of German womanhood through education died in the ashes of defeat as completely as did the regime's expansionist dreams.⁸⁹

Winning the youth in National Socialist Germany required the deliberate molding of character by the state. Thus the need for state intervention to insure the proper outcome of history betrayed the

same anxiety for the future that characterized other areas of the National Socialist philosophy. The history textbooks used brief character sketches (usually of military leaders) to convey the lessons of the past. Determined to keep the soldiering ethos alive, the Nazis institutionalized the model of the political fighter and promoted self-sacrifice and hardness in the schools.

The textbooks exploited both the positive and the negative characteristics of youth: exuberance and the lack of mature restraint. The Nazis both built upon and distorted the *Wandervögel* tradition, which emphasized youthful protest against bourgeois society. Such a tactic was not without its dangers. The volatility of youth had to be channeled by the absolute authority of the *Fuehrerprinzip*. Exploiting youthful rebellion, such as the examples of Hitler's own stormy youth, could prove antithetical to the intellectual function of the schools.

As a male-oriented ideology, National Socialism encountered obvious difficulties in gaining support from women, a task never satisfactorily resolved because women remained more reluctant supporters of the Hitler ideology than men. 90 Women were discouraged from political activity, and their subordinate role was also reflected in the education prescribed for them in the *Volksschule*. Yet there were numerous women who enthusiastically endorsed Hitler's program, even at a time when the portals of higher education were being closed to them. But the theoretical subordination of women to men by the Nazis did not preclude textbook writers from placing them occasionally in dominant roles vis-à-vis men. Nazis applauded the Spartanlike qualities of such heroines as Maria Theresa of Austria and Queen Louise of Prussia.

The Nazi success in character building was spectacular but shortlived, which is not to say that their experiment in education was any less ominous. The lack of permanency was no hindrance to a regime whose urgent desire for territorial expansion depended upon an almost spasmodic outpouring of sentiment. The Hitler regime's ability to galvanize such sentiment raises profound questions about the function of education in modern society.

Chapter Six

Educating for Membership in the Mystical Community: The Volksgemeinschaft

Gemeinschaft is . . . not only a means of education, but also one of the highest aims of education. Gemeinschaft is both, it is shaping and shape [Formung und Form], it is arrangement and classification, it is being bound and loosed. A new education must educate through Gemeinschaft and for Gemeinschaft.

Helmut Stelldreht,*NEUE ERZIEHUNG*

Even though the Nazis elevated personality development to a position of primacy, education was never intended to be individual but collective. The survival of the community demanded a uniform pattern of schooling: education in the generality and the molding of the individual by and through the social milieu. Nor should education prepare one for individual action. The aim was always mass action: the individual's unqualified embrace of the general will as embodied in the person of the Fuehrer.

The community of blood, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, was in reality little more than the male band of World War I writ large. The lionization of the mass will in education was intended to overcome the centrifugal tendencies that historically kept Germans divided. Education as preparation for mass action always aimed to generate a fanaticism sufficient to sweep away all obstacles blocking the achievement of National Socialist philosophical and political goals. "The 'nationalization' of a people," according to Hitler, "is first and foremost a question of the creation of healthy social circumstances

as a foundation for the educational possibilities of the individual." 1
Kurt-Ingo Flessau interpreted Hitler's social aims more cynically:
"For [National Socialists] the *Volk* was never anything but a
manipulated

mass and a will-less collective, never a totality of respected individuals." 2

Nazi educators insisted that there was a historical precedent for their covetously desired community of blood: the original Germanic community of pure instinct and creativity. The task of Nazi educators was to restore that *Volksgemeinschaft*, to temper people for membership in that fraternity by plucking out the impurities accumulated during centuries of alien influence. Because urban values were most inimical to the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Nazis spawned a number of organizations to restore the vital linkage with the soil. At its most elemental level, the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* represented yet another tactic in the Nazi interventionist strategy that sought to block the trend toward modernity.

The ultimate purification for males was compulsory military service. And the saturation of German life in its entirety by the soldierly ethos was an inclusive goal of education: inculcating the military virtues from the time of early childhood to the threshold of maturity. Compulsory military service then insured that any remaining vestiges of intellectualism or personalism would be removed once and for all before the beginning of professional life. The total militarization of German life satisfied an urgent goal: acceptance of war by the individual as an integral part of a life of Darwinian struggle.

Germanic Socialism: The Community of Blood

All are equal under the banner of the Hitler Youth. All boys and girls are clad in our uniform so that no amount of money can embellish or

enhance it. It is due in no small measure to these uniforms that Germany has acquired a new social order.

Baldur von Schirach^{REDEN}

Not to "each the same" but "to each his own."

Motto of Prussian Noble Order

In his analysis of German character, Ewald Banse included among his people's weaknesses a "defective political sense." Germans lacked a herd instinct, and since the time of the old Teutonic farmers, according to Banse, Germans were excessively concerned with their own salvation and not inclined to think along communal lines.³ Unless education could awaken (or create) that herd instinct, Germans would continue to fight among themselves, as they had done throughout a considerable portion of their history.

Unity of thought became an obsession with the Nazis. Karl Christoffel wrote in *Volk-Bewegung-Reich*: "The highest community which exists on this earth is the folk." The advantages upon which

the folk depended for its existence were multiple (and for Christoffel they had a distinctively conservative ring): blood, mother tongue, tradition, law, culture, religion, homeland, and history. A necessary prerequisite for the creation of a homogenous community was an "authority commanding and using force." 4 For all of their official rhetoric about instinct and biological determinism, the Nazis nevertheless urgently insisted that active intervention through education was necessary to create and to sustain a national community, just as intervention was needed to mold character.⁵

Community was as malleable an entity in the aggregate as personality was in the individual. Considered together, the Nazi theories dealing with community and personality composed a portrait of life almost limitless in its plasticity. Even Alfred Rosenberg's turgid prose added substance to such a conclusion. He defined National Socialism as "the molded strength of twentieth-century thought . . . molded for security of the collective German folk and its blood and character."⁶ But what was to Rosenberg "molded strength" was to Hans Peter Bleuel nothing more than the "stage management" of public life in Hitler's Reich. Furthermore, the individual was fused with the mass against his own "natural inclinations." All of the powers of mass suggestion that a modern technological state could call forth—slogans, parades, demonstrations, performances—were harnessed to achieve this fusion.⁷

The coherence of a community determined its strength. Helmut Stellrecht suggested a hierarchy of community values which figured prominently in Nazi calculations:

A living community which lives and works together will be stronger than a community which can only be brought together daily for hours. The family is therefore a stronger form of community than the school. The soldierly community was for us from the perspective of history a stronger form than the political community. Therefore, the party has ordained in the SA and SS the soldierly form of the community. . . . The form of the community will always be stronger the more it encompasses the entirety of life.⁸

Stellrecht maintained that a synthesis of personality and the mass (community) was possible. By clinging to these polar opposites, the Nazis underscored their resistance to two other contemporary forms of community life: Western liberalism and Marxian socialism. The Nazis blamed these ideologies for the atomization of modern man. Under the influence of Western liberalism "each party insults and slanders the others."⁹ Thus political parties in the Weimar Republic became the worst enemies of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In a speech presented to an international gathering of university educators, Bernhard Rust boasted that German youth had "torn themselves free from the overpowering influence of a culture not their own." In its place they had, according to Rust, "turned again toward the life of manly discipline and glorified once again the spirit that leads one to sacrifice his own good for the good of all."
10

A strong utilitarian motive also undergirded the Nazi belief in an inviolable community. To have any chance of success, unified action was required to overturn the Versailles settlement and the democratic system in Germany. One textbook noted: "It was impossible to pursue *Freiheitspolitik* [the politics of freedom] if the entire nation" had not courageously supported a "desire for fanatical freedom. . . . But that was unthinkable so long as the people were shattered in classes, parties and interest groups." The necessary preparation for that *Freiheitspolitik* was a massive program to educate the German people and to prepare them for armed conflict. This ambitious attempt to overturn the verdict of the World War could succeed only "if liberalism and Marxism were extirpated and the deep yearning of the masses for a just social order was fulfilled."¹¹

The yearning of the masses for a just social order contradicted the belief noted earlier that Germans were inclined toward disunity. In fact, the Nazis continually railed about the apathy of the German people. Germany's only salvation, in the opinion of the Nazis, was the fusion of nationalism and socialism. One textbook declared: "One person from the beginning has perceived this most clearly: Adolf Hitler."¹²

The Twenty-Five Point Program of the NSDAP limited citizenship in the *Volksgemeinschaft* to those "bound through common blood and common culture with the German people" and who "think and feel German."¹³ Obviously, the proper configuration of the genes could not guarantee that one "think and feel German." The heart must be right to qualify one for membership in such an exclusive folk community. One's genetic inheritance took him only partway toward acceptance; an act of the will (volition) was necessary to complete the journey.

In order that there be no mistake, Marxist socialism was declared "un-German" and a clear perversion of the German thought process.¹⁴ By contrast, German socialismthe true socialismobtained rebirth and perfection in National Socialism. The Nazis identified a number of socialistic traditions in German history: the ancient period, the medieval order of knighthood, the spirit of Prussianism, and the German regiments in the Great War.¹⁵

This Germanic socialism claimed an ancient lineage, having arisen during the "heroic period," when "the pure Germanic folk" lived

in "a paradise without knowledge, labor and art." 16 Nazi historians drew heavily upon Fichte's writings to fill in the outlines of the utopia they longed to restore. Although that primitive community eventually was corrupted by alien influences, the National Socialists strove to regain their pristine birthright. It became the task of education to resurrect the values of primitive community for modern Germans.

In their attempt to regenerate German life, the Nazi authors exploited the life of the early Germans to the fullest. They identified blood kinship as the source of *Gemeinschaft*. "They [the early Germans] settled together, fought in battle together, stood up united in the district and peoples' assemblies." Although no political need existed to unite them against alien peoples at this time, the *Sippengemeinschaft* (tribal community) held firmly together. "The family managed a common house and farm, field and pasture." Whoever wished to establish his own farm "must learn in his youth to work and obey." The *Gemeinschaft* of the home grew into the *Gemeinschaft* of the village because the "young peasant on his newly established property held true to the old freehold."¹⁷

Of all of the Indo-Germanic peoples, the *Deutschen* distinguished themselves as the people "most persistently attached to the soil."¹⁸ The authors of *Volk und Fuehrer* claimed that within "every real German" there lay the "desire for landownership." "So long as this peasant blood lives, the German people is young, a people of the future."¹⁹ This peculiar tendency to possess land rendered the destiny of the German people "staggering." Tacitus concluded that

they "were not . . . created for the city, but needed nature, forest and sod."²⁰

Another text identified the peasantry as "the life source of the people." Living in the city brought "diminishing birth rates" as well as a pronounced loosening of the ties of *Gemeinschaft*.²¹ While the peasant "lives close to nature," the urban dweller "stands opposite nature." The burgher could "discover, enjoy and artistically fashion [nature], but it is as foreign to him as his clothes," which he wears today as "symbols of the foreign infiltration of the peasants."²² Not only was the mode of life in the city foreign to the German peasantry, but it contained another danger for him: "the unhealthy bodily and mental influences." It was reported that ninety thousand inhabitants of Berlin at one time lived in cellars.²³

The customs of the early German period were relevant to the Nazis when they discussed the period of rapid urbanization in the late nineteenth century. German nationalists looked on with trepidation as many people who moved into the urban centers lost both their deep feeling for their locality and any meaningful attachment

to their own people. These city dwellers were not at home anywhere. The Nazis identified urbanization as the indisputable cause of the "disintegration of the Germanic soul." 24

In the city, family commitments were less binding. The family was no longer "a living community."²⁵ A *Klasse-5* textbook stated:

"All of the pleasures of the world are offered people in the large cities. Consumption, work and haste make them nervous. . . . Lunatic asylums and mental institutions above all are filled by urbanites. Blood and soil belong precisely together. When this unity is sundered, there is degeneration as the consequence."

The children of city dwellers sought their roots in this "soulless desert of stone . . . without playing in the forest and field, without ever having to experience the miracle of the sunrise and the starry night. . . . Thus the large city becomes a danger for the German folk." The terrible economic privations of workers' families also had a detrimental effect upon the strength of the national community. The bitterness of workers over their plight turned them "against the state, the monarchy, the rich," but at the same time it caused them to search for a leader who could rescue them from their difficulties.²⁶

Of all the dangers posed by the large cities, however, the greatest was the "mixing of healthy blood with that genetically diseased and racially alien." In the small communities, individuals had information "about their neighbors' families and forefathers, but in the large cities many knew not even their own grandparents."²⁷ (Hitler was a good example. He could not positively identify one of his own grandparents.) Thus after an auspicious beginning, the Germans unfortunately suffered a "tragic loss of Nordic blood."²⁸

The problem of how to restore the bonds between folk and fatherland occupied for a considerable time some of the keenest minds in German education. Even before the Nazis came to power, many German educators felt that a systematic program of education would restore the educational birthright of the youth.²⁹

The Nazis lamented the flowering of Jewish capitalism in the German cities. The writers of the history texts attempted to avert a serious dilemma by distinguishing between "Jewish" and "German" capitalism. But after blaming the plight of workers on the greed of wealthy Jews, the authors still had to justify the existence of large German fortunes. They argued that German employers such as the Krupps maintained an attitude toward their workers which was entirely compatible with the traditional German *Gemeinschaft*. One text stated: "Only a few employers . . . concerned themselves with suitable dwellings for workers." The founder of the Krupp industrial

works was quoted as saying: "I have the awareness that my enterprise will be a blessing for the country and for the workers." Werner von Siemens, the inventor of the dynamo, was also used as an example of a German industrialist. 30

In a discussion of the Marxist theory of surplus value, the authors declared that National Socialists "disapproved this notion" because "work is service for the *Gemeinschaft* and the factor upon which man's worth depends." The racially valuable man "cannot live without this knowledge." Whereas Marx prophesied increased antagonism between classes, the Nazis maintained that a diminution of class tensions was possible in their system.³¹

The concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, like so many of the Nazi ideals, was fired and crystallized in the flames of World War I. For an entire generation of Germans, the war was an overwhelming mass act. A single feeling united everyone: "We belonged together for better or worse." Thus true comradeship came into being: "The German *Volksgemeinschaft* was born. That is the most sublime of days. Men, who had for weeks haughtily avoided one another or who feuded in hate and squabbling, shook hands and recognized in the other a brother. The German worker found his fatherland; Marxist agitation fell away; the power of the blood and the native soil was indeed stronger than all class conflict and humanity babble." In the trenches "courage and selfless devotion unto death for the comrade was the law." A different hierarchy of values prevailed than in civilian life. The soldier found that what counted most was not formal learning but having a comrade who shared with him "the last morsel of bread, the last draught out of the

canteen," and who remained by his side even under the most murderous enemy fire.³²

Legislation was enacted to emulate for the civilian population the informal laws that made the *Gemeinschaft* of the trenches such a formidable community of warriors. One example was the 1916 "Law for the Duty of Fatherland Auxiliary Service," which warned that "each hand which rests at home helps the enemy." Those not fighting with "weapon in hand" were admonished to strive at their workbench or lathe or office "to bring the war to a happy ending."³³

After he assumed the political leadership of Germany, Hitler frequently harkened back to the comradeship of the trenches as the ideal community. On March 21, 1933, at the Day of Potsdam, he called upon Germans to fight their way out of the Depression. "The emergency of the people can only be eliminated through a true *Volksgemeinschaft*." Employing terminology reminiscent of the society of the trenches, Hitler demanded that "all professions and classes should help one another in such comradely fashion as the 'front fighters' once had in the World War."³⁴ The Nazi slogan "Common Need Before Private Greed" was of this same tenor.

Schoolchildren were told that National Socialism would "free the manual laborer from exploitation" and make of the former proletarian an "equal, self-confident countryman and permit him to share in all of the cultural values of the German people." Furthermore, every social class must realize that "all work ennobles, if it is done conscientiously," and that "workers of the fist and workers of the brow," far from being adversaries, "complement one another." The duty of followers was to remain loyal to the organization of management. Thus strikes and other production-arresting procedures were prohibited because "the Fuehrer decides and carries the full responsibility." 35

Because a large percentage of German workers had not voted for his party before 1933, Hitler sought to win their loyalty through a gigantic May Day assembly in the initial weeks of his chancellorship. Upward of two million German workers were brought together to hear the words of the leader, who drew them symbolically and officially into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. "It became the day of honor of the German worker." And in the autumn of the same year, the Nazis, whether by conviction or by stage management, held "October Sunday" to pay homage to German farmers, who were reminded that they "create provisions for the state for coming times, just as the worker must forge weapons."36

Work became a folkish symbol in Hitler's Germany, both in the deceptively attractive external sphere and in the awful underside of German life, which was carefully hidden from sight. Workers were told that "work ennobles"; concentration camp inmates passed through an arch that proclaimed the greatest of all of the "Big Lies": "Work makes free."37

The school textbooks began early to inform children about various National Socialist welfare programs designed to benefit the folk. A story in *Kinderfibel* described a poor, sad old man walking home wearing shabby clothes and carrying a dinner pail. The pupils were told that the old man was saddened when he "thought of his poor wife and children at an empty table." But this particular day when the father opened the door, "all are happy," and

the table is covered and the kettle steaming. The children leap and the mother has happy eyes. The father thinks: What nice thing has happened? Then the mother says: The *Winterhilfe* [Winter Relief] has brought many good things! and now all are so happy in the little room.³⁸

There were also stories that encouraged the ideals of industry and thrift, as well as social unity. Frequently the authors attempted

to rationalize the existence of social distinctions among *Volksgenossen* (those related by nationality) in an exclusive community of blood. But they could do no better than the biblical "many members of one body" theme. The great German people included many occupations, the children were told: "One person lives in a large house, another in a small one. But now all help in one work; they create together all of the things that the German people need: railroads, machines, furniture, clothes, food, and all the others." The children were urged to take pride in their work. They were also regularly reminded of the Fuehrer's accomplishments for the nation's welfare. "Long, broad highways the Fuehrer made possible. Out of damp swamps good fields have been made. Many houses were built. Ships, airplanes, machines."

39

The history textbooks discussed in elaborate detail the various social benefits which National Socialism provided the people. An example was the workers' assurance of being treated right and being provided a "healthy and beautiful place to work." The government encouraged population growth by granting matrimonial leaves and leaves with pay for fathers of newborn children.⁴⁰ One of the most celebrated of the Nazi social programs was Strength Through Joy, which provided travel and vacations for workers, as well as the "opening of the theaters and concert halls to the masses." The opportunity for travel permitted, above all, an opportunity to become acquainted with the beauty of the German homeland, which city dwellers seldom witnessed: "Through all of these undertakings the government made out of the proletariat, which had been afflicted with the blemish of inferiority, a

Volksgenossen with equal rights. The word 'worker' became the great title of honor of the nation."⁴¹

The National Socialist regime initiated a number of training programs designed both for those entering the universities and those terminating their education at the age of fourteen. The *Landjahr* (year on the land) provided city youngsters a nine-months training course in a rural camp. One of the stated aims of the *Landjahr* was the breaking down of provincialism and class distinctions. The fourteen-year-olds labored in the fields during the morning hours and in the afternoons attended classes, consisting primarily of political indoctrination. According to Nazi records, the boys returned home bronzed and muscled with an average weight gain of ten pounds.⁴²

Education for equality was also advanced by the *Arbeitsdienst* (Labor Service) in which "the student worked beside the manual laborer." "Here the young man learns that he is a member of a large *Gemeinschaft*; here he experiences, through the effort of all, a common work coming into being. The strong separate themselves from the weaklings; leadership comes into being."⁴³

Labor Service was required of all able-bodied Aryans between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five. Like the *Landjahr*, this program proclaimed the idealistic purpose of welding Germans together in a closer national unity. The six-hour day, as in the *Landjahr*, culminated with late afternoon instruction in National Socialist principles. The *Arbeitsdienst* was more openly militaristic than the *Landjahr*, with uniforms and drill with brightly shined shovels. 44 Will Decker described the *Arbeitsdienst* as an attempt to educate youth by reestablishing their links with the soil: "Everything real is bound inseparably to the earth. From it grows the strength of the nation. From it alone can strength be recalled. The introduction of German youth to German soil is the most genuine principle for the fulfillment of the educational duties set for Germans by National Socialism."45

Although many foreigners considered the *Arbeitsdienst* merely a device to relieve unemployment, it appears to have been much more. Its entire purpose was compatible with National Socialist philosophy, especially the "blood and soil" mystique. But although former "front fighters" supported the *Arbeitsdienst*, they considered it a poor substitute for the long-forbidden obligatory military service.46 In their deepest meaning, the *Landjahr* and the *Arbeitsdienst* were conceived to neutralize the effects of modernity (including urbanization, industrialization, and critical scholarship).47

National Socialist educational practice was antimodern to the extent that it sought to reverse the tide of modern liberal thought, which disparaged the nationalist virtues associated with nation and race. Even before the Great War, a strong current eroded such

nationalist ideals, but the pressure from the left was sharply accelerated in the aftermath of the war. The Nazi opposition to modernity was twofold: rejection of industrialization and rejection of the cosmopolitanism that flourished in the cities and was epitomized by Jews, whose attachment to national symbols the Nazis considered tenuous at best.

With frenzied determination, the political right clung to the nationalist creed that had sustained them in the Great War. Since Christianity was a spent force on the extreme right, truculent nationalism remained the only force providing meaning for them in their anxiety. Quite simply, they refused to permit their faith to die.

The creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was a desperate attempt to stem the tide of revulsion against militarism and expansionism. German nationalism was as desperately threatened as the ideology of racialism. Proper education was one of the principal interventionist tactics employed to resurrect German national solidarity.

The Militarized Society

We must train up a race of Spartans, and those who are not willing to enter voluntarily into this Spartan community must be prepared to renounce any hope of becoming citizens in the future.

Baldur von Schirach, *REDEN* (1935)

Whoever loses his weapon, loses his freedom.

SO WARD DAS REICH

Paradise lies in the shadow of the sword.

Der Jungmann, *PERIODICAL OF NATIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTE*

We Germans fear God but naught else in the world.

Otto von Bismarck, 1875

For males Nationalist Socialist education was incomplete without compulsory military service. 48 The unquestioned assumption that military service followed formal education ran like a thread through the Nazi philosophy, as well as through the writings and speeches of Hitler. Compulsory military service was designed to bring a harmonious balance to life, to offset the schools' tendency to create intellectual monsters. Hitler insisted that only universal military service could save Germany from decadence, and he referred to the resumption of conscription as "one of the greatest events in history."49

As is the case with most heads of state, Hitler's motives were usually more complex than his public explanations. Hitler privately admitted that three years of military service would provide ample time for professional men to "forget all the muck that was jammed into their heads at school" and to "discard everything which will not be of future use to them." Those unable to forget, he said, "are

ripe to become professors a race apart."⁵⁰ But the Nazis initiated activities at every stage of a German youth's education and upbringing to counteract the intellectualism that would hinder the acceptance of Nazi ideas.

There was no doubt that the rhythmic tromping of marching feet mesmerized German society, including some eminent historians. "We are marching!" one author roared, and he conceded that the words themselves contained a "magical meaning."⁵¹ Yet it was difficult after the catastrophe of 1914-18 to gain acceptance for the idea of aggressive war. Therefore, the Nazis carefully tailored several official positions on war to accommodate the various audiences to which they were addressed. German nationalists who were emotionally committed to a reversal of the outcome of the war were approached directly, and the Nazi propaganda was designed to brutalize them further for the coming conflagration. Many others dreaded the pos-

sibility of another war, and they had to be conditioned by the regime at least to acquiesce in its coming. The orgiastic glorification of war as man's most noble undertaking worked with only a minority. 52 Ernst Jünger's essays exalting war ("War as Inner Experience" and "The Front Fighter's Idea of the State") were only a small part of a significant literature from which the Nazis could draw.

War was ideal for bestowing meaning in a society torn loose from its moorings. War became an emotional clearinghouse for disoriented psyches, providing motion, drama, adventure, risk, challenge, and release, or what old Norse Skaldic poetry referred to as a "kill spree."⁵³

German scholars refined Hitler's crude militaristic and social Darwinist ideas and made them somewhat more palatable to the educated mind. For example, Karl Stürm synthesized the German past and National Socialism, referring to his new conception as *Wehrpflicht*, or the duty to bear arms. Stürm insisted that "everything that Germany is, or shall be, she owes to the army." Not content with the militarism of the Imperial Reich of Wilhelm II, Stürm regarded the army both as the armsbearer of the nation and the vanguard of the nation's will. Hence military service at the end of academic education was viewed by the Nazis as a sacred duty for a young man. The culmination of National Socialist education was the active support of military preparedness for a spectacular national regeneration.⁵⁴

Ewald Banse, a military scientist active in curricular development for the folk school, went even further than Stürm in converting military science into a national ethic. Banse insisted that military

science be the province of the whole people: soldier, scholar, adolescent, teacher. Acceptance of the deeper meaning of war by students would create a "uniform desire for war and victory as an indispensable condition of national independence."⁵⁵

Germans must be welded together in a "feverish mass of blood and iron" and the youth indoctrinated to give their lives willingly for their country. Like Hitler, Banse admonished the schools to concern themselves less with imparting "lumps of knowledge" and more with "pouring steel into the nerves of the German people." Suitable methods for this "steeling process" included marching, engaging in militarized sports, returning the youth to nature, and teaching military science to children at all stages of their school career.⁵⁶

Intellectualism in the schools was by no means the only impediment to the militarization of German society. The cosmopolitanism of modern life served as a more forceful roadblock to the success of the Nazi educational experiment. Yet both intellectualism and cos-

mopolitanism could be combated through the schools, especially by developing "stern will and an all-embracing faith." Militaristic education was designed to counteract the trend "so prevalent nowadays to escape from life's complexities, from intellectual doubt, procrastination, forced inactivity, and the general 'sophistication,' and 'disintegration' of modern social life." 57

Although Hitler anticipated an extraordinarily difficult educational task almost ten years before coming to power, he certainly did not restrict the undertaking to education. Karl Christoffel pointed out that Hitler "erected as the model for the entire people the soldier and the soldierly bearing."⁵⁸ *Mein Kampf* contained a summation of Hitler's own view of education as the harnessing of the national will:

For this, to be sure, from the child's primer to the last newspaper, every theatre, and every movie house, every advertising pillar and every billboard, must be pressed into the service of this one great mission, until the timorous prayer of our present parlor patriots, "Lord, make us free!" is transformed in the brain of the smallest boy into the burning plea: "Almighty God, bless our arms when the time comes; be just as thou hast always been; judge now whether we are deserving of freedom; Lord, bless our battle."⁵⁹

Helmut Stellrecht referred to the soldierly upbringing as a "steering mechanism" so crucial to the survival of the folkish community that its absence would "directly modify the character of the people." It was the "military tradition" which "continually brought the people into line racially" and guaranteed the greatness of the nation.⁶⁰ Stellrecht's comment was another startling admission by a leading educational theorist that the state must tamper with the biological inheritance of the race in order to ensure the

development of proper human beings. The essential contradiction of National Socialist philosophy was thus contained in this admission that the German race would go hopelessly astray without the artificial strictures of militarization.

Even the schoolbooks prepared for the youngest pupils continually resorted to depictions of military exploits: they were filled with stories of airplane pilots, parachutists, and stunt fliers, as well as pictures of marching columns of soldiers in full battle attire.⁶¹

A necessary corollary to the theme of militarism was the preoccupation with death and sacrifice, usually a direct result of military operations. Death, although grimly detailed, was nevertheless glorified in order to stir adolescents to emulate willingly the heroic sacrifice.

George Usadel used the analogy of leaves on a tree to describe the relationship between individuals and a race. "Contrary to liberalism, the life and death of the individual are as the falling leaves of autumn not the end of the tree not the end of the nation with the passing of one generation." The tree prevails, even though the leaves "fall and die away" and the branches perish.⁶² This was a stark admission that the intrinsic value attached to the race vastly superseded that attached to individuals even individuals within the master race. The tree (race) would continually produce more leaves (genetically superior Germans), though countless numbers must inevitably and periodically be sacrificed.

The German children were told that death was an important matter for Germans, beginning with the earliest times when their remote ancestors "built stone houses for the dead." One text gave a lengthy description of the construction of these *Heldengraben* (hero's graves), some of which were built more than six thousand years ago:

"With such selfless work the northern peoples honored their elders and ancestors. They felt themselves in thankfulness linked with them beyond in death. For that reason, the living also testified by the graves in love and thankfulness. Weapons and implements, clothing and ornaments, even food and drink were found in many *Sippengraben* [tribal graves]."⁶³

The text *Volk und Reich der Deutschen* included a selection from the ancient Nordic "Edda":

Possessions pass away,
 Relatives die,
 You yourself die as they.

One thing I know
that lives forever:
the famous deeds of the dead.⁶⁴

Heroes who died at sea accepted their watery graves with a forlorn yet mystical melancholy, which was reminiscent of the attitude of land fighters. The following short poem from a book of readings was entitled "Last Request":

I die in the churning sea;
Grant Gorch Fock a seaman's grave!
Take me not to the churchyard there;
Lower me deep in the sea here!

Sail-maker, sew me in!
Helmsman, a word of scripture!

Lad, remove your cap!
And then appropriately overboard!
Gorch Fock 65

The textbook writers proudly proclaimed the bearing of arms to be an age-old tradition among Germans. In ancient days, mere lads "laid aside everything childish and received a sword in their hand in order to fight at the side of their folk and to maintain their honor pure." The sturdy *Wehrbauer* (armed peasant) in historical literature personified the undying loyalty prized by the National Socialist philosophy: "He never separated himself from his weapons. They accompanied him when he strode behind the plow; they laid also close at hand when he cleared land. . . . Nights they hung on the bedpost." The highest wish of the *Wehrbauer* youth was "to grow up to be a battleworthy, brave man." To prepare for that day, the youth practiced at war games with the use of weapons.⁶⁶ At the insistence of Ewald Banse, the Third Reich attempted to revive the ancient tradition of militarized sports.

The writers romanticized and accentuated the importance of Germany's "iron centuries . . . in the German age of heroes" (ca. 1800 to 800 B.C.) This history, as written by the Nazis, fairly bristled with the courage and the resourcefulness of the warlike groups from the north of Europe. Unfortunately for the Nazis, who preferred to eulogize individual heroes (though, paradoxically, they were preparing students for mass action), the period of Germanic prehistory offered no identifiable heroes. Personifying the desired qualities in the *Wehrbauer* sufficed until military heroes could be identified for praise. Armin, the conqueror of the Roman legions at Teutoberger Forest in A.D. 9, served as the first authentic German military hero. Yet, like Siegfried, Armin was destined to die in his

"ripest manhood" at the hand of a traitor, although not before his work "was accomplished and he lives immortal in the people, the liberator of Germans from the Roman yoke."⁶⁷

A universal maxim of German history seemed to be "Whoever loses his weapon, loses his freedom."⁶⁸ The loss of military preparedness avenged itself bitterly upon German peasants. "Princes, knights, ecclesiastics and burghers decided the political fate of Germany in the imperial period, for the peasant had no part thereof."⁶⁹

The military tradition of the Germans lingered on during the Middle Ages but only among a tiny portion of the people the mounted knights. The degradation of the peasants and the suppression of their sanguine instincts continued for several centuries.⁷⁰ A more shameful period, in the opinion of the Nazis, was the mercenary age, when "power-hungry and gold-coveting princes . . . sold the services of the sons of their land as soldiers to foreign, warmaking

powers." In the darkest page of their entire history (the Thirty Years' War) "Germany became the incinerator of the nations." 71

German militarism rose in its most muscular form out of the ashes of the Thirty Years' War but in a very unlikely spot: Prussia. An exceptionally impoverished land, Prussia devoted an inordinate portion of its state revenue to defense. Not capable of being both Sparta and Athens, most of Prussia's rulers elected to emulate the former. Frederick William I (1713-40), a hard-boiled militarist, "worked unceasingly his entire life long" for the benefit of his people and state. He remained, however, committed heart and soul to the army. "Beautiful clothes and delights, such as coffee, tea, chocolates, rich people could afford, but not the poor Prussians." 72 Many of his contemporaries misunderstood and hated the "Garrison King," but "he did not allow himself to be deterred because of that; he did what he considered to be his duty." 73 It could be said without exaggeration that under Frederick William I, every Prussian was "born for arms."

The king's heralded military force, his "thousand-legged machine," was the best armed and drilled of its day, 74 and its Prussian drillmasters were employed by numerous foreign armies to improve their own efficiency. Frederick William worked for his beloved Prussia at a maniacal pace until his last days. "Work was the content of his life. The great Prussian virtues diligence, obedience, punctuality and thrift he had bred into his people." 75

Frederick II, son of the "Garrison King" and known in history as Frederick the Great, reaped a harvest with the military machine so lovingly maintained by his father. In the course of the three Silesian Wars, Frederick I gained the reputation of a military genius. Both

to Hitler and to National Socialists, Frederick was the symbol of Prussian militarism: the philosopher-king brandishing an unsheathed sword. The textbooks told of Frederick's heroic stature, how he developed in the "collective German people new national feeling." Even to Goethe, Frederick became "the polar star . . . around which Germany, Europe, [and] indeed, the entire world appeared to rotate."⁷⁶

In commemoration of Frederick's life, the textbooks included the inevitable poem written for historical figures whose heartbeats kept cadence with the tempo of National Socialism:

Fredericus, My king, whom the Larbeer Crown adorns,
Ah, had you only more often indulged plundering,
Fredericus Rex, My king and hero,
We would knock the devil out of the world
for you.⁷⁷

Frederick died, and with his entombment Prussian glory was buried for a generation. Then came the Corsican and the ignominious French occupation of Germany. The lethargic pace of German revival prodded Fichte to scrawl with an acid pen the rousing lines of his "Addresses to the German Nation." Rarely, if ever, had a series of classroom lectures moved a nation so profoundly: "If you go any farther in your stupidity and unconcern, then all of you expect the evil of slavery, privation, humiliation, scorn and subjugation. . . . Our oldest forefathers triumphed, because they were eternally enthusiastic; and then this enthusiasm triumphed always and necessarily over the one who was not enthusiastic. The poet Heinrich von Kleist added his clear defiance and venomous hatred of the foreign conqueror: "I will not love the hellish demon brood! So long as they dare remain in Germany, hate is my office and vengeance my virtue." 78

Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher became Prussia's avenger. Taken as a prisoner of war, Blücher refused to carry rocks in the prison camp. "I was born free and must likewise die. Napoleon must be defeated and I will help; I will not die before that has happened." While he awaited the opportunity to fulfill his oath, the martial spirit welled up in Blücher: "I itch in all my fingers to grip the saber." And when the opportunity presented itself at Waterloo, Blücher, though seriously ill and under physicians' orders to remain in bed, defied those who attempted to restrain him. "Whether I am embalmed today or go into the other world unembalmed" matters not a whit, he thundered.⁷⁹

After Germany's unification by Bismarck in 1871, her military power exceeded any she had known for centuries. Yet there was

peace for almost half a century: "And war came not. When Germany is strong, Europe has peace." Bismarck attributed the reverence and awe which other nations held for German arms to another factor: "We Germans fear God but naught else in the world."⁸⁰

The Nazi historians sought to generate pride in Germany's performance in World War I, although the overwhelming odds faced by her army tempered their pride with gloom. ("24.4 million soldiers of the Central Powers engaged victoriously 44.5 million people and the materiel of the entire world."⁸¹) Another text elaborated:

Germany was in the World War a beleaguered fortress, against which from all sides the armies of Europe and the foreign parts of the world assaulted. An unconquered wall lay protectively around the German homeland: the German front in the east, south and west and beyond on the sea. Against this wall the enemy hammered four years

long with the weapons and munitions which the war industry of the entire world supplied them. It was futile; the German front held. But the sacrifices were frightful, as well as the accomplishments of the German men who fought here. The scenes of fighting on the western front between the North Sea and the Swiss frontier, Flanders, Somme, Verdun, Voges are sacred ground and will be recalled eternally with reverence and wonder by each German. 82

Rather than conceal the more gory details of the World War, the textbook writers recited these details at length. They gave exhaustive descriptions of the battles, especially those at Verdun and the Somme, which took hundreds of thousands of lives. "Night after night the French attacked," and the "unceasing shots of thousands of guns" deafened the men crouching in the trenches. "Then again the French attacked, morning, evening; then the Germans counterattacked." The stretcher-bearers "lugged wounded in ground sheets attached to long stakes. Here and there appeared a leg, or a pale, entangled head from beneath."83

A Bavarian soldier in the battle of the Somme (in which Hitler also participated) described the terrible scene:

All at once the horizon flares up. It whistles and relents . . . roars and howls, as though a hell had opened up. Now the devil is loose among us. The earth springs. The ears scream from the blows. Mines go off; "Willy, Willy, look out! Now the Tommy is coming! Hand grenades ready!" A man springs in our hole, without helmet, without weapon. A mine which bursts close beside our hole, hurls us to the ground. "My leg, my leg! Help!" It's the man without the helmetSsst Bum! Ssst Bum!84

The lighthearted enthusiasm of 1914 turned into profound grimness, and the soldiers of 1918 trudged forward only out of a

sense of duty. Toward the end even this weak acquiescence evaporated when fresh recruits moving to the front heard war-weary veterans hiss that they were "strikebreakers" and "prolongers of the war." The Nazis charged that the Social Democrats simply waited in the wings, with traitorous glee, ready to exploit the fatherland's defeat. One text quoted a government minister, Hugo Hasse of the SPD, who said of the nationalists: "Now we have them."⁸⁵

Nazi historians considered the Paris Peace Conference part of a world conspiracy to destroy by devious means the superior German military which the Entente armies had been unable to defeat in the

field. More than four-fifths of the world "had united in Versailles to pillage the German people, to maintain them in disarmament, economic slavery and dishonor." 86 In the eyes of the Nazis, Germanic blood was being assaulted by "dark, Satanic powers." But Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's philosophical minion, asserted that all of the "demonic forces" of the Weimar Republic could not enchain the "unbowed soul" of a Germany that found its spirit "renewed and deepened" by the struggle to maintain the "myth of the blood."87

German militarism did not end with the cessation of hostilities. The textbooks reverted to what must be identified as one of the deepest meanings of the National Socialist movement: the dogged refusal to allow the martial spirit of the World War to die. In many millions of Germans, however, it had already waned. Those who upheld the tradition of arms found themselves "in a strange world that they did not understand."88 Undisciplined hordes of revolutionary soldiers armed with machine guns sped through the streets of German cities in their armored vehicles with red flags flying, frightening the citizens.

While the democratic forces vacillated, the German army took the situation in hand and smashed the Spartacists, thus preventing a communist takeover of the country. "In enslaved Germany, government, parliament, parties and economic groups deliberated in endless talks. Only the soldiers acted."89 (There was no mention of the fact that the soldiers acted at the behest of the democratic government.)

The Nazi historians viewed the Free Corps Movement, which developed "entirely out of the front-spirit of the last year of the

war," as the assertion of the old Germanic military virtues. The old instincts reappeared when the raw edge of war and defeat cut through the veneer of alien culture which had stifled them so long. The war veterans formed the nucleus of the Free Corps, but young scholars and students without military experience soon joined them. "The spirit of the Youth Movement [Wandervögel] associated itself again with the front fighter."⁹⁰ Albert Leo Schlageter was the epitome of the new political soldier. Hitler Youth members frequently quoted Schlageter: "Be not weary; say to all of the comrades out there: Help Hitler rally German men."⁹¹

After 1933, Hitler's party worked feverishly with the full resources of the state to inflame the German people's flagging belligerence. The Fuehrer introduced compulsory military service and embarked upon a bold foreign policy designed to quicken the heartbeat of Germans. Those responsible for public enlightenment followed the new course as if all Germans were unanimously behind the government. The school textbook played its part in the campaign: "How

the people then rejoiced: 'Again a master, again soldiers, no more defenseless surrender to the enemy!' How our hearts laughed in love when we saw our troops march, when our fliers roared through the sky, when our heavy guns assembled . . . when our battleships and U-boats plowed the sea. And the Fuehrer is commander in chief of the armed forces. . . . 'Dear Fatherland, rest easy!'" 92

Accompanying the repetitive assurances of German armed might was the equally persistent drumming of the duty to serve. Hitler said, "War service is the service of honor of the German people."⁹³ Certainly the Nazis exploited every means, including the rhetoric of the history books, to get the population marching to the unheard cadence in the German heart. But the persistent opposition to Hitler's foreign policy adventures from the upper echelons of the army's leadership demonstrated that his campaign of seduction was not entirely successful.

Once World War II began, German schoolchildren were fed an almost endless quantity of impressive statistics designed to establish the invincibility of their war machine. One text claimed that by 1941 their armed forces had taken 3.8 million prisoners and had destroyed 21,000 tanks, 32,500 guns, and 17,000 aircraft.⁹⁴

The National Socialist ideal of the militarized society reached its fulfillment in the "black battalions": the SS elite guard. The universality of the military obligation in Hitler's Reich did not preclude elitism in its most drastic form. In fact, there was a conscious effort to set apart certain individuals for more extensive training. The German SS was unique in that it existed outside the legitimate structures of both the regular army and the Reich

government. Its leaders recognized only the extraconstitutional Fuehrer-authority.⁹⁵

Freed from the slightest legal or bureaucratic limitations, the SS was the exclusive instrument of the German dictator's will: the interventionist instrument par excellence for the restructuring of German life. Occupying a position so near the pinnacle of power, the leaders of the SS were assiduously groomed and nurtured in special elite schools. Just as the Jesuit schools bolstered Catholic influence in the world and the exclusive school at Eton enhanced the growth of the British Empire, the elite "Adolf Hitler Schools" were intended to provide a ready supply of leaders for Germany.⁹⁶ The SS orders contained the purest distillation of the qualities preferred by Nazi educationists.

The high-tension ethos of SS training was designed to contrast with the *Gemütlichkeit* tradition in Germany. Hitler was fond of saying that Germans lacked ruthlessness and historically had been reticent in claiming what was theirs. As the highest example of the fighter, the SS man was to keep his sword forever unsheathed. The

mentality of the SS borrowed heavily from the popular literary form known as heroic realism, which glorified war and embraced a world in which peace did not exist. Ernst Jünger and other heroic realists reveled in a disjointed world ruled by tension and strife. 97

The unheroic pedantry of Heinrich Himmler contributed some rather ignominious elements to heroic realism. Himmler retained the fighters' ethic but added the element of practicality: the worship of success. ("The word 'impossible' must never be heard in the SS.")⁹⁸ The SS man was judged by his ability to carry out assignments to perfection, with no thought of justification, purpose, or method. Admission of failure to complete a task was the ultimate degradation. SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann, on trial in Jerusalem for mass murder, could still boast of the efficiency with which he carried out his Fuehrer's grim orders.⁹⁹ In that sense, Eichmann was the perfectly educated National Socialist.

The existence of the SS orders was based not upon moral commitments but rather upon commonplace objectives. The SS man's enemies were prescribed for him, and his sole purpose in life was to be unfailingly available for any action specified by the Fuehrer.¹⁰⁰ In a very real sense, Hitler's educational theory was perfected in the SS man.

Because the elite schools established by the Nazi regime furnished officers for the SS, their curriculum was designed to produce the mentality Hans Buchheim discussed in his article "The SS Instrument of Domination." The following selection was part of a patriotic ceremony at one of the elite schools. It was printed in *Der Jungmann*, the journal of the Napoli:

"Maxims of the Sword at the
Winter Solstice, 1942"

Paradise lies in the shadow of the
sword.

The lukewarm and the neutrals do
not make history,

but the men who take upon
themselves struggle.

Courage is more than the power of
the sword . . .

No man sees the struggle Which
I initiate with
steel blades.

The sword is right and truth.

Effeminate is the man who does
not fight with

weapons which he holds in his
hands.

Only the blade holds the sword in
the sheath.
If you cannot be a fighter, then be
a sword with
 which another conducts his battles!
Whoever wants to live must also
fight, and whoever
 does not want to fight in this
world of
 external struggle does not deserve
to live.
Wax dissolves, noise fades away,
putrefaction decays,
 shadows blur,
But you, you are flexible steel,
You are a weapon, you have no
choice;
 fight!
One man with a good sword
 is of more worth than a hundred
chatterboxes!
And if you do not engage life,
 you will never win life! 101

With such men as those nurtured by the curriculum of the Napoli, Hitler could fulfill the aim that he revealed to a party comrade, Otto Strasser: to establish among the German people a "caste of warriors" who could convert other nations into "helots working for the Teuton warrior caste." In such a world, the German sword "will guarantee their peace, and will be the recompense for their labor."¹⁰²

The German *Volkgemeinschaft* was presented in the Nazi

textbooks as the prerequisite for national greatness. When Germans acted in mass according to the "dictates of the blood," the folk prospered. But when they opened themselves to alien influences (as they had throughout much of their history), they floundered.

The community par excellence was the army, the agency through which Nazi ideals could be most thoroughly indoctrinated, including the ideals of struggle, duty, sacrifice, and acceptance of death. The Nazi education aimed to prevent the decline of the martial spirit.

Chapter Seven

Combating the Un-German

[The National Socialist movement] must make certain that in our country, at least, the mortal enemy is recognized and that the fight against him becomes a gleaming symbol of brighter days, to show other nations the way to the salvation of an embattled Aryan humanity.

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The mission of National Socialist educators embraced not only the creative chores of developing proper character in the young and of establishing the basis for vital community life but also the demolition, root and branch, of every influence inimical to the realization of Nazi aims. That Nazi hatreds regularly took precedence over their benevolences should not be surprising when one recalls that Hitler's party institutionalized hate. ¹ The ferocity of those hatreds, to be sure, blew like a wintry draft through the land, chilling any altruistic inclinations that Germans might have harbored. All areas of life were affected by Nazi hatreds, including the reading materials prescribed for the schools.

The schools' mission was apocalyptic: to reverse the decline set in motion by those forces collaborating to destroy the basis of German life. The schools were to teach students to apprehend the true nature of the threats to their way of life. The most fundamental of all Nazi hatreds, anti-Semitism, served as the common denominator of the generality of evil. With the decline of belief in a personal devil, the Nazis projected the demonic characteristics collectively onto the Jews, who were then held responsible, directly or indirectly, for all of the calamities that befell the German folk.

As Gamm wrote, "Henceforth the Jew became the world-conspirator."² For members of such a tiny minority to be endowed with such potency, it was necessary to ascribe to them a superhuman capacity for evil.

International Jewry was a many-headed monster, threatening all compartments of Aryan life: racial, ideological, spiritual, and intel-

lectual. To have any possibility of success in battling such a multifaceted demonic force, the Nazis had to convince the nation not only that all of its enemies were in fact one and indivisible but that in the cosmic struggle only one of the combatants the Aryans or the Jews would survive extinction. Therefore Hitler could declare without any hesitation: "With the Jews there are no deals, but only the hard either-or." 3

The Educational Significance of Nazi Racialism

Unquestionably Semitism has . . . a heavy complicity in that disdainful materialism of our day, which views every work as only a transaction and threatens to choke the old gemütlichkeit work of our people.

Heinrich von Trietschke HISTORISCHE UND POLITISCHE AUFSCHÄTZE

For God's will gave men their form, their essence and their abilities. Anyone who destroys His work is declaring war on the Lord's creation, the divine will.

Adolf Hitler MEIN KAMPF

The perception of race has generally been limited to its genetic or biological component. It was never so limited by the leading National Socialist thinkers, who always insisted that race encompassed more than the genetic inheritance of a category of individuals. In his *Mythus*, Alfred Rosenberg wrote: "Race is not so much a cognition as it is an avowal, an avowal of character values. Race is a feeling not a reality."4 According to Jäckel, Hitler held to a belief in the existence of "people of a higher and lower race . . . better and worse ones." Each race had a specific value attached to it which was unique. Hitler argued: "Every people, apart from the numerical value deriving from its count, also has a specific value which is peculiar to it."5 Like many of the tenets of National

Socialism, Rosenberg's and Hitler's statements indicated that the racial phenomenon was essentially voluntaristic, not wholly deterministic. Hitler developed this point further:

The importance of the blood value of a people, however, only becomes totally effective when this value is recognized by a people, properly valued and appreciated. Peoples who do not understand this value or who no longer have a feeling for it for lack of a natural instinct, thereby immediately also begin to lose it. Blood-mixing and lowering of the race are then the consequences which, to be sure, at the beginning are not seldom introduced through a so-called predilection for things foreign, which in reality is an underestimation of one's own cultural values against

those of alien peoples. . . . For this reason internationalmindedness is to be regarded as the mortal enemy of these values. 6

Hitler learned from Alexander von Müller, his mentor in Munich, that the Jews were a "ferment of decomposition." Ironically, in the view of the Nazis, the Jewish attempt to destroy other peoples set those peoples in motion, awakening their resistance. Said Hitler: "In that case then, Paul and Trotsky are the most estimable Jews for having done more towards this end than anyone else."⁷ Like the human body's immune system, which through inoculations develops a resistance to microbes, human societies can also contrive similar powers of resistance.⁸

National Socialist racial theory embodied the same contradictions that plagued their epistemological and metaphysical theories. The fuzziness of their racial concepts was extraordinary, however, even for National Socialists. They insisted not only that a race possessed a "soul" but that individuals making up a nation embodied a uniform racial essence. In many instances the virulence of Nazi racial hatreds placed their theories beyond either logic or reason. For example, Julius Streicher argued: "A single violation of an Aryan woman by a Jew suffices to contaminate her blood forever." Streicher explained that such a violation deposited the alien soul within the inner essence of the Aryan. Hence blood and soul were equated in such a manner as to render them synonymous.⁹

Even though such notions as that of the *Herrenrasse* (literally, "race of lords") had little foundation in biological or historical research, they formed the basis of Nazi racial mythology because they were meaningful (if not always comprehensible) to the masses.¹⁰ When ideals could increase Hitler's power and influence

over Germans, he embraced them. Although Hitler's visceral anti-Semitism apparently required no justification, the Nazi *Weltanschauung* contained an elaborate web of myth and pseudoscience designed to establish its credibility.

Race was declared fundamental to life and culture. All culture was the product of the creativity of the Aryan. Some of the intermediate races could preserve culture but could not create it. The lower races, symbolized by the Jew, lived parasitic lives as culture destroyers. The authors of a Nazi historical work declared that Germans fought the Jews "not only because they are alien blood" and "onerous parasites in the living space of our people, but most especially because they are racially worthless." The "roaming, plundering nomadism" of the "unstable and restless 'eternal Jew'" was for the various host populations a "barren ode to desolation."¹¹

Whether or not their concept of race depended upon a literal, physical typology, the Nazis nevertheless prominently included such typologies in many of their writings. For example, *Volk-Bewegung-Reich* described the "racially pure Nordic man" as "tall and slender in the structure of the head, face and nose . . . light-colored hair, blue eyes and a ruddy complexion." The ideal of Nordic feminine beauty was "a face of milk and blood." This text was quick to point out that more important than the outer characteristics were the inner characteristics of the Nordic soul: courage, pride, fondness for travel, and a yearning for distant and boundless expanses. 12

The prevalent racial typology drawn of the Jews established their distinctiveness and utter repugnance to everything German. One text included the following description of Jews by a seventeenth-century source: "They are either pallid and yellowish, or dark-complexioned; they have generally large heads, large mouths and protruding lips, bulging eyes and bristling eyelashes, big ears, twisted feet and hands which hang below the knees." The same source described the character of Jews as devious, false-friendly, treacherous, and inconstant.13

During the first years of Hitler's rule, German textbook writers avoided the more noxious forms of racial and national xenophobia. Hitler was attempting to ease foreign suspicions of Nazi aggression, at least until he could rearm the Reich.¹⁴ Therefore, the Nazi revolution was described in the school textbooks as essentially a bloodless affair concerned primarily with internal matters. By 1939, however, Hitler had cast off his cloakhis soft

attitude toward other racial and national groupsexposing to all the world the true National Socialism.¹⁵

The lengths to which the later, more radical textbook writers went to blame the nation's woes upon the Jews would have been humorous had the authors' intentions not been so deathly serious. One text explained that it was in Zehntland, the Roman province in south Germany, that the Edenlike innocence of the fatherland was first transgressed by that greatest of all evils: Jewry. "Here for the first time Jews also came into the German lands. Their design, in general and at all times, was to earn effortless gold."¹⁶ In a reference to the medieval period, there was the suggestion that wandering Jews were the culprits who spread the bubonic plague. The great pestilence erupted in the Rhenish cities during the latter phases of the Crusades and, according to the Nazi authors, was transported throughout the Continent by Jews, who "wandered in great swarms to Poland and Galicia (bringing into being eastern Jewry)."¹⁷

Whenever a monstrous evil occurred, there were attempts to link the crime (on a descending scale of complicity) to Jews, half-Jews, Aryans with Jewish wives, or Aryans with close Jewish associates or

friends. In the event that none of these direct connections could be established, the evil was frequently attributed to general Jewish influences which poisoned German life. All forms and degrees of anti-Semitism were exploited in the history texts, including the medieval religious and economic biases against Jews, which had few if any biological overtones. The stock in trade of this brand of anti-Semitism was the charge that the Jew was a usurer and a "robber and oppressor of the poor." According to a medieval source quoted in one text, Jews "entrench themselves even in the smallest villages. And when they lend five gulden on credit, they take sixfold mortgage, and take interest upon interest, and from this compounded interest, take everything that the poor man has." 18

In the modern period, Jews were castigated for their espousal of liberal causes and for their domination of cultural life. One text used Prince Karl August von Hardenberg, an early nineteenth-century government minister, as an example of Jewish contamination by liberal ideas. Until late in his life, Hardenberg had been a loyal Prussian, but his "third wife was Jewish." Following this marriage he had laws enacted recognizing "equal rights for 'adherents of the Mosiac religion.'" 19

The coverage of Bismarck's Reich invariably ended with ambivalent conclusions. One text reported that "Bismarck could not suffer the Jews. . . . He once said that he could not appoint a Jew to an official office as representative of the king." But the same authors lamented that Bismarck lacked proper racial consciousness "because for him, as for almost all contemporaries, Jewry was not an alien race but only another religion." The Iron Chancellor even

allowed "his own property" to be "administered by a rich Jewish banker."²⁰

In the revelations of Jewish influence in the Second Reich, it was implied that the nation's exploitation to a large extent was the result of Bismarck's lack of insight:

Now, after 1870, they founded newspaper after newspaper in order to bend official opinion according to their perceptions. They became scholars, doctors, lawyers. They controlled politics. . . . In reality it came to them, as formerly to Heinrich Heine . . . to destroy the things of which our people were proud: Prussianism, army, monarchy, peasantry. For they felt that all these had opposed their customs and erected a firm bulwark against them.²¹

Another text reported that the Jewish-controlled *Berliner-Tageblatt* "was read by a circulation of several hundreds of thousands."²² In addition, the Jewish firm of Mosse controlled fourteen newspapers with daily circulations of more than three hundred thousand. Ger-

many's ostracism in the world's press was also blamed on Jewish journalists. 23 Yet another textbook explained:

All of these papers drummed the Germans incessantly: peace is the normal condition of mankind, which need not be protected; the danger of war is an invention of the militarists; heroism, honor, *Volksgemeinschaft* are lies or foolishness, at least for the modern man, incredible points of view. The man of the twentieth century is an international citizen of the world."24

The history texts persistently hammered out the theme that the Jews opposed such virtues as "loyalty, manliness, sense of sacrifice," each of which, according to the "mistaken Jewish teaching, was unmodern, humorous, alien to the world."

Furthermore, art, literature, and the theater became Judaized. The authors quoted a remark made by a Jew in a newspaper in 1912: "We Jews administer the affairs of the German nation."25 In another text it was reported that in Berlin, 48 percent of the doctors were Jewish; 54 percent of the attorneys; 50 percent of the university professors and medical faculty; 28 percent of the philosophers; and 80 percent of the theater owners.26

Hitler's hostility to intellectualism and his hostility to Jewry were almost indistinguishable. He came close to polarizing the intellectual mind as Jewish and the unsophisticated mass mind as German. In the following comment, Hitler employed the same terminology to describe intellectuals that he regularly used to label Jews:

I know the intellectual too; always indulging in sophistry, always probing and searching but always wavering and uncertain, mobile but never sure. I know that the intellectuals are only too prone to look

down on the masses and to judge them by their own standards and their own so-called intellect, and yet there are things which the intellect cannot understand because he cannot see them. It is true, however, that the masses are often somewhat slow of comprehension and are, in certain respects, backward, not so mobile, not so bright. But they have something; they have faithfulness, tenacity, and stability.²⁷

It is clear from his other writings that Hitler regularly stereotyped the Jew as the intellectual and the Teuton as the intuitive man.

The authors of textbooks written for older *Volksschuler* frequently surveyed the ideas of famous Germans and quoted examples of their prejudices against Jews. The composer Richard Wagner was a favorite source for anti-Semitism: "The Jew is the most astonishing example of racial constancy that world history has ever seen.

[Race] mixing

injures him not; whether he mixes masculine or feminine with the alien-type races, a Jew continually comes to light. An incomparable phenomenon." 28

Adolf Stöcker, a court pastor to William II, was unsurpassed in his hatred of the Jews. The Nazis found his utterances as valuable as those of Wagner: "Jewry is a drop of alien blood in our people's body. We must become clear about that in order to annihilate this power in the press. If a false, sour, fermenting dough penetrates through an entire folk, it can die of it." Stöcker asked rhetorically, "Why Jews will not be manual workers . . . why not a single time a sack-carrier?" The fiery pastor then raised the cry of Cato the Elder of Rome: "Carthage must be destroyed! . . . So we call the sacred government our *ceterum censeo*, until the Jewish domination is broken." The Nazis could point with relish to a line from Stöcker, the cadence of which conformed perfectly with the heartbeat of National Socialism: "I believe and hope that a liberator will come; it is certain that the next great statesman of Europe will take up this fight [against Jewry]."29

The writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain displayed many of the attitudes found later in National Socialist histories, including a sense of drama and mission in the treatment of the race question. A *Klasse-6* text contained the following quotation by Chamberlain:

I can certainly tell you how my mission, my passionate love for, my belief in Germany grows; the more I become acquainted with other nations, the more I communicate with people, the educated segment and uneducated segment of all classes, out of all peoples of Europe, the more I love Germany and the Germans. My belief, that the entire future of Europe, that is, of civilization, of the world, lies in the hands of Germany, has become our security.30

Chamberlain reserved his most vituperous condemnation for the Jews. Jews will turn Aryans into a "'mestizo herd' and a physically, spiritually, and ethically degenerate people." Chamberlain introduced an ideal later popularized by Hitler that blood-mixing reversed the evolutionary process causing the gradual downfall of the superior group. The decline of peoples, according to Chamberlain, could also come about by spiritual contamination, "through mere social intercourse: A man can very fast, without being an Israelite, become a Jew. Many need only associate frequently with Jews, read Jewish newspapers, and concentrate upon Jewish life conceptions, literature and art."³¹ Chamberlain's was an ivory-tower approach to the Jewish threat. But for Hitler, whose mind was first squeezed into the proper mold and then glazed by the white-hot flames of war, Chamberlain's

ideas were a prescription for the literal, physical annihilation of the Jewish people.

Paul de Lagarde continued in the tradition of those late nineteenth-century thinkers who insisted upon the complete estrangement of Jews and Germans. Lagarde remarked: "Where one Jew sets foot, there are in a short time twenty Jews, and where there are twenty, they rule." The Jew "thrives on the ruin of the nations." 32

A grudgingperhaps unconsciousadmiration of Jewish power revealed itself in curious ways throughout the Nazi accounts of history. A single Jew could thwart a vast project. For example, Karl Peters, the celebrated German explorer, was continually frustrated in his position as Reich Commissar for East Africa by the Jewish ministerial director in the Colonial Office, "who worked in secret against him." A few well-placed Jews, along with their Social Democratic "fellow travelers" in the Reichstag (a relatively weak body) conducted "an agitation against 'Colonial atrocities' for which they blamed Peters."33

The potential for mischief of this widely dispersed and comparatively small group of Jews at times approached the superhuman. In the Balkanthe powder keg of EuropeGavrilo Princip, a "Jewish member" of the Black Hand Society, struck down the Austrian crown prince, Franz Ferdinand, "to spark the world conflagration."34 (No evidence was given to substantiate the claim that Princip was in fact Jewish.) During the war, a single Jewish intellectual from Berlin, Dr. Grelling, wrote a book, *I Accuse*, which charged the German government with deliberately planning the war "in order to enslave alien peoples." Backed by

"English and French gold," that solitary volume was translated into "all the world's tongues" and distributed by the millions.³⁵

Walter Rathenau, another isolated Jew, gained control of the wartime economic apparatus in Germany, and "in the 'turnip winter' [1916/17] the hunger began."³⁶ One textbook related that during his hospitalization in Pomerania, Hitler observed for the first time how "Jews and traitors" obtained the upper hand in Germany. "For that reason the homeland had so little bread and the field army so little munitions. He was glad to be healed so that he could report back to the field."³⁷

In a book of readings for students studying the English language, the author skillfully selected and edited excerpts from the anti-Semitic writings of Englishmen which were of use to the Nazis. One long article by Benjamin Disraeli, entitled "A Jew Judging Jews," was among these. The inclusion of a piece that exhibited such laudatory references to Jewish tenacity suggests that the Nazis were willing to endow their adversaries with abilities frequently exceeding their own.

Disraeli explained the survival of Jews in history:

Do you think that you can crush those who have successively baffled the Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, Rome, and the feudal ages? The fact is you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian organization. It is a physiological fact: a single law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian and Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, and Christian inquisitors. No penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should be absorbed in an inferior, or be destroyed by it. The mixed persecuting races disappear; the persecuted race remains. And at this moment in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish mind exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you obey; or their literature, with which your minds are saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect.

Disraeli's article also alluded to certain conspiratorial activities which apparently confirmed Nazi suspicions of Jewish power.

You never observe a great intellectual movement in Europe in which the Jews do not greatly participate. The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian diplomacy which so alarms western Europe is organized and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany, and which will be in fact a second and greater Reformation, and which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews, who almost monopolize the professional chairs in Germany. . . . So you see that the world is governed by very different personages to what is imagined, by those who are behind the scenes. 38

One of the intriguing features of the German histories was their tendency to depict Germans in recognizable Jewish stereotypes, thereby highly praising Germans for the same qualities that brought immediate censure to Jews. A classic example was the praise meted out to enclaves of steadfast German settlers in eastern

Europe who clung to their own customs, resisting assimilation with the much larger Slavic populations among whom they settled. When Jews did likewise, their unassimilated presence within other cultures was called "parasitic, clannish, and cancerous."

In a section entitled "Great Trek of Peasants Toward the East," one text explained that, without a Kaiser, German peasants were eventually "scattered over the entire expanse between the Baltic and

Black seas in countless islands of *Volkstum* [nationality]." These settlers "had given all of their strength to the guest states" (as did the Jews elsewhere). Yet "appreciation had they not reaped. Their existence had been nothing other than hard struggle." Furthermore, their situation had "worsened from decade to decade." 39 No more accurate description of the plight of Jews in "guest states" could have been penned.

The adventures of "wandering Germans" frequently constituted important portions of Nazi history textbooks. After recounting the achievements of German immigrants in America, many writers nevertheless lamented the sad fate of their former compatriots. "The children of the immigrants already spoke English among themselves and considered themselves Americans, no longer Germans. The United States became the 'mass grave' of Germanism."40 The Nordic blood of German immigrants "strengthened above all the English settlers in America"; yet the descendants of these same settlers "fought during the World War in the American army against the homeland of their blood."41 The Nazi authors attempted to have the best of two contradictory lines of thought: on the one hand they claimed German credit for American achievements, while on the other they condemned the mixing of blood which strengthened the racial composition of Anglo-Saxon Americans.

Along with their mixed praise of German immigrants abroad, writers made the tacit admission that German culture except in eastern Europe lacked the staying power of Jewish culture. Textbook writers grieved that in the course of the nineteenth century "six million people were lost to the German Reich through

migration . . . capable, adventurous people."42 (Textbook writers the world over would later grieve that in the course of the twentieth century, six million more capable, adventurous people were lost because of the actions of the German Reich.) No writer boasted that the German race could not be absorbed by an inferior one, as Disraeli had boasted of the Jews.

German writers reserved their most wrathful condemnation of Jews for their outrageous behavior after Germany's defeat in 1918. A *Klasse-5* text quoted a "Vienna Jew" who said after the Armistice, "Now we Jews are entirely on top; now we are masters, our ardent dreams are fulfilled."43 In another text the postwar period was entitled, "Germany Under the Domination of World Capitalism." Jews were said to work their machinations through the three great Allied statesmen: Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and David Lloyd George. Each of these leaders had a Jew (Bernard Baruch, Georges Mandel, and Edward Sassoon) standing behind him, pulling the appropriate strings. And even the Weimar Constitution "stemmed from the Jewish constitutional authority, Preuss."44

Especially alarming to ardent German nationalists was the Jewish attempt "to win influence over the upbringing of youth." Jewish domination of education was particularly feared because of the "degenerate" themes that characterized Jewish thought and writing. Examples of such "degenerate" sentiments abounded in the history textbooks, such as, "The dead of the World War fell on the field of dishonor." And in answering the charge that they were traitors, a Jew wrote: "Treason is no longer a disgrace, I have the honor to offer myself as a traitor. For me and my like-minded associates, there is only one slogan, which is called: carry on!" The Nazis accused the Jews of defiling the honor of German soldiers. As proof they called attention to a Jewish charge that the German fighting man was "as devoid of humanity, as depraved and heartless, as precisely only a German soldier can be." 45

The Jews were reproached by the Nazis for promoting race-mixing (among other races but not among their own) and for introducing Germans to corrupt Negro music and Negro dances. Even the ardent nationalists, Gustav Stresemann, eventually succumbed to Semitic influences. After pursuing "the sharpest nationalist direction" during the war, Stresemann "was married to a wife of Jewish blood and became a Freemason after the war."46

According to the Nazi historians, Jews in the Weimar party-state congregated in the leftist parties, whose power was extraordinarily enhanced by "Jewish gold."47 "In the fourteen years, two hundred Jews sat as 'German representatives' in the Social Democratic party. . . . and in Prussia 85 percent of the leading political positions were in Jewish hands." The Jews held similar power over industry, where 57 percent of metal works, 40 percent of textiles,

and over 60 percent of garment works were Jewish-controlled. Germany's plight was highlighted by the bold heading of one text: "Germany as an Exploitation Colony of High Finance." The "tribute slavery" was accentuated by Stresemann's leadership.⁴⁸

In his conclusion to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, "A state, which devotes itself in the age of racial poisoning to the cultivation of its best racial elements, must one day become the lord of the earth." Hitler's autobiography revealed that his ill-defined Jewish hatred was brought into clearer focus largely as a result of his contacts with the alcoholic poet, Dietrich Eckhart. Horst Ueberhorst wrote of the Hitler-Eckhart relationship, "By no man was Hitler so strongly attracted as by Dietrich Eckart, the proclaimer of a racist-folkish rebirth of Germany." Eckart turned Hitler's hatred in the direction of a "downright apocalyptic extension."⁴⁹ Eckart published an account of his conversations with Adolf Hitler, identifying a number of themes which Hitler never abandoned, even two decades after Eckart's

death: Moses was a Bolshevik leader; the Jews were the "most clinically adaptable people in the world"; and racial pollution was the original sin of mankind. 50

In general, Nazi textbooks identified everything international as Jewish: Marxism, Christianity, socialism, universal peace, the League of Nations, Freemasonry. And because the Social Democratic party propounded the idea of "international solidarity of the workers," it was by definition "Jewish," regardless of whether any particular leader of the moment was actually Jewish.

In addition to being charged with internationalism, Hitler saddled Jews with responsibility for the "idea of the equality of all men." The Jewish notion of equality repudiated the "aristocratic principle of nature" and was thus an attempt to "play a trick on nature."⁵¹ The Nazi educationist, Ernst Krieck, rejected the notion of equality outright: "We . . . recognize no such 'humanity' concept; we recognize and accept only the existing manifold of races and peoples in their historical setting."⁵²

A number of Nazi histories charged that masonic lodges served as the meeting places for Germany's foes: "To the Freemasons, the Jews were 'brothers': 'The Master has taught us to love every man as our brother, and the Jew is not less than all of us a child of the eternal Father, who has created us.'" The Nazis reported that at an important meeting during the 1920s in a Parisian Masonic Lodge, a plot was instigated to destroy Germany and to keep her perpetually in bondage. The churches were also called a haven for Jewish-internationalist-egalitarian thought.⁵³

The textbook materials designed for German children rarely

covered the Jewish persecutions which followed the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws (1935). None of the government's specific actions to curb Jewish influence nor any of the Jewish pogroms were even mentioned. One book gave considerable coverage to the 1935 Party Days, which had significance because this particular convocation inspired the Nuremberg racial laws. This book stated that because "Juda [was] the enemy of the world," the Nuremberg Laws were designed to retard its growth as a "hereditary disease."⁵⁴ As harsh as this legislation appeared, it was only the tip of a massive iceberg whose destructive force presently would assume ghastly proportions.

The Ideological Foe: Marxism

National Socialism and Bolshevism stood opposite each other as fire and water. The murderer and arsonist of Moscow knew only one aim, the world revolution, and sought also to ripen Germany for the red terror.

SO WARD DAS REICH

If, as Hitler claimed, the success of a political movement lay in convincing the masses that all of their enemies were indeed one, then their attention must be riveted upon that one foe with an unbreakable resolve. In the literature of National Socialist history, there was an ever-increasing attempt to equate Jewry and Marxism, even to the point of making them indistinguishable. As one text related:

If the Marxist teaching triumphs in the world, the Jewish prophecy of world domination by the 'Chosen' Jewish race will become true. Marx felt himself called as the messiah of this future empire. His final aim naturally he did not articulate; he would only be able to win the Jews with [such an appeal]. But it was valuable to win the masses of the workers, and until then there was still a wider path. 55

Another history text described Marxism as the "new redemptive religion" of materialism, which had destroyed not only "the belief in God and immortality" but the "hope in the final judgment beyond the grave." For the Marxists, it was sufficient to achieve "paradise on earth."⁵⁶

The Nazi text materials painted an extremely repulsive portrait of Karl Marx. He was only the brains of the proletarian movement; he "was not the man to set up the barricades himself." He needed the masses to thrust themselves into the breach. As the spokesman for a workers' movement, Marx's teachings were "totally strange." "His writings were overladen with philosophical concepts and foreign words. Their subtle chains of thought were incomprehensible to uneducated men." German authors obviously expected schoolchildren to compare Marx unfavorably with their own Fuehrer. They reported that the founder of world communism "was

no orator who could carry along a great gathering of simple men."⁵⁷ (Again the "intellectual Jew" and the "simple German" were juxtaposed.)

Marx's personality was also ridiculed his "unbearable arrogance" and his "biting mockery and insinuation." He was a man to whom "nothing was holy. . . . Hate and negation were the contents of his habits. This was the way the man appeared who undertook to give the workers a new *Weltanschauung*." A perceptive or cynical student might have noticed a strong similarity between Marx's supposed hateful personality and the meanness of Hitler himself. Nor could the student with penetrating insight have failed to note the obvious parallel between the two movements' approaches to propaganda. The following description of Marxist political activity could just as well have applied to members of the National Socialist party: "Whoever had once joined, received daily instruction in the Marxist *Weltanschauung* through his party newspaper and almost weekly in the

assemblages. And this was a school of hate against the other classes, against state, nation and all faiths." 58

The Marxists corrupted the simple virtues of love of God and country. "Fatherland?" The Marxist answered that "the worker has no fatherland." Nationality was called obsolete, and the state was made up of "lackeys of the possessing class." God was dismissed as a "bourgeois prejudice behind which bourgeois interests hid."59 By undermining their values, the Marxists cunningly "alienated the German workers from their own people" and turned "class against class." Indeed, the final objective of Marxist propaganda was not to manipulate the levers of state power but to "fundamentally alter the thinking of the entire people."60

Because German workers had no great leader before 1933, they were tempted to follow the un-German teachings of Marx. "Was not here still hope for a better future? In bitterness . . . they opened their hearts to the false teaching" and streamed in droves to the banner of Karl Liebknecht, the "clever academician and fanatical Prussian hater" who founded the Social Democratic party. The textbook writers accused the Social Democrats of "open treason" for their activities during World War I.61

Hitler confronted Marxists for the first time as a young man doing construction work in Vienna. Although living and working in the same environment with the Red proletarians, young Hitler adamantly refused to associate with their workers' organizations. "The shop steward went to the boss and said: 'We will not work with this fellow.' Thus he must move from one building to another." Hitler's reaction to their militancy was hardly apathetic, according to the Nazi histories. He "delves ever deeper into Marxist teaching.

. . . He learned to distinguish between seduction and being seduced, and sought for the first time to wrench his worker associates from the seducer."⁶² The future German Fuehrer's hatred of Marxian socialism was so all-consuming that he once vowed to an audience of workers, "I will possess no greater pride than if, at the end of my days, I can say: I have won the workers for the German Reich."⁶³

As a soldier hospitalized at Pasewalk in Pomerania, Hitler noted the foul mood of the German people and the vanishing of the "spirit of 1914." Strikes broke out in munitions industries, and Berliners, "led by the half-Jew Karl Liebknecht and the Polish Jewess Rosa Luxemburg," fell upon "the backs of their brothers at the front."⁶⁴

With the armistice only a few weeks old, the Spartacist Uprising broke out in Germany, and according to one textbook, the Soviet embassy made available to German revolutionaries "gold amounting to the millions out of the Russian state treasury." Hugo Hasse, an Independent Socialist member of the German cabinet, also "received

great sums from rich German Jews." 65 (There was no mention of the large sums the Kaiser's government had awarded the Bolsheviks, nor of the agreement between the imperial government and Lenin to transport the Russian radical leaders to the Russian frontier in 1917.)

The textbook writers went to great lengths to point out the preponderance of Jews among the Russian Bolshevik leaders. As happened so often in subversive activities, "the Jews delivered the knockout." Of the 565 members of the revolutionary committee in Russia, "469 were Jews." Furthermore, "Jewish bankers from America provided the money."66

The Marxist threat (no distinction was made between the moderate Majority Socialists and the Soviet-styled German Communists) swept over Germany, where "many people shouted not 'Heil Germany' but 'Heil Moscow.'"67 After assuming power, the Nazis intensified the struggle against Marxism. The leading German Marxists (Social Democrats and Communists) disappeared into jails and concentration camps, but the struggle begun in the streets was now directed against Soviet Russia and the Communist International.

Stalin was vilified in the textbooks as an ogre of diabolical proportions. "Stalin destroyed the family. . . . Stalin destroyed religion." In Soviet Russia, "to be 'Godless' became a title of honor." The churches were converted into "cinemas, assembly rooms and garages." In addition, Stalin "shot hundreds of thousands and brought the number murdered since 1918 to 8.6 million."68 Perhaps no more notorious example of "the pot calling the kettle black" exists in history. Extensive documentation

confirms that Hitler's own SS contingents in Russia were destroying churches and annihilating great masses of Russian civilians *at the very time that the text mentioned above was being used in the German schools.*⁶⁹

Few of the histories mentioned the Hitler-Stalin Nonaggression Pact (August 23, 1939), and even the brief references given were apologetic. "The Soviet Union consented because it believed Germany and the Western powers would so weaken themselves in an extended war that they would both finally fall victim to Bolshevism." Even if this analysis is correct, it leaves Hitler's own motives unexamined. One text feebly explained that this pact with Stalin required of the Fuehrer "the most bitter suppression of his feelings."⁷⁰

History textbooks that covered the German-Soviet conflict interpreted the war against Bolshevism in apocalyptic terms: Hitler fought not only as the savior of Germany "but also as rescuer and unifier of Europe." To lend credence to the idea of an international crusade against Bolshevism, the same texts pointed out that contingents of Finns, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Rumanians fought on the eastern

front as allies of the Germans, as did volunteers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, and Croatia.
71

In the later stages of the war, the prospect of a Soviet victory was broached by Nazi authors, and they portrayed the fate that awaited a defeated Germany in extremely graphic terms. Given such a calamity, "millions of German workers will . . . suffer unspeakable horrors in the labor camps of Siberia and in the endless expanses of the forests in the East."⁷²

By this point in the war, an appeal to ideology was as irrelevant in Germany as a similar appeal had been in Russia in the winter of 1941-42, when Stalin attempted to rouse the Soviet citizens by appealing to a deeper level of consciousness: the willingness to fight for Mother Russia. As the Soviet armies turned the tide and drew ever closer to the borders of the German Reich, a terrified population needed no more than to be reminded of its fate. *Übermensch* theories could not save Germany.

The Spiritual Foe: Christianity

Before I was baptized a Catholic, I was born of a German mother.
Adolf Hitler, 1924

At the back of Hitler's anti-Semitism there is revealed an actual war of Gods. This is so, of course, only for Hitler himself. His party comrades had no notion of the fantastic perspectives in which their master saw their concrete struggle.

Hermann Rauschning, *VOICE OF DESTRUCTION*

In the old Garrison Church at Potsdam in 1933 the aged Reich president, Paul von Hindenburg, extended the official recognition

to Adolf Hitler, the newly appointed chancellor, who solemnly gave honor to God in his address to the distinguished assemblage and pledged his emphatic support to the maintenance of Christianity in Germany.⁷³ The inaugural ceremony of the Hitler regime in a Protestant church presented the Fuehrer an unparalleled opportunity to begin a policy of studied duplicity which characterized his government's attitude toward religion from the start. By perennially injecting affirmations of religion into his speeches, the Nazi Fuehrer was able to pose as the defender of Christianity against godless Bolshevism, while behind the scenes he was craftily planning the annihilation of the Christian faith.⁷⁴

During the *Kampfzeit*, the years of struggle before he came to power, Hitler cleverly sought to identify himself with the aspirations of religious people and to disarm those who suspected his movement of anti-Christian motives. In a 1923 speech, Hitler told his audience:

"This symbol [the swastika] is not directed against the Christian Cross. On the contrary, it is a political manifestation of what the Cross attends or must attend." On other occasions, the Fuehrer declared that he was concerned only with matters of state and not with religion.⁷⁵ The resulting confusion allayed potential opposition to the regime but also caused millions of Germans to misread the regime's true intentions. The Nazis' secret aim seemed to have been to leave the church a wormeaten hulk to be broken apart by an allpowerful German state at the conclusion of World War II.

The sentiments Hitler expressed in the secrecy of his military headquarters and in the company of his intimate party associates reflected neither disinterest nor solicitude toward Christianity.⁷⁶ "The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity," he exclaimed to his dinner guests on the evening of July 11, 1941. A short time later, commenting upon the religious controversy that had engulfed Germany since the inception of his regime in 1933, he said, "The time will come when I'll settle my accounts with them [the clergy], and I'll go straight to the point. . . . I shan't let myself be hampered by judicial scruples. . . . In less than ten years from now things will have quite another look." The fundamental importance which the Fuehrer attached to the question of religion was clearly revealed in a statement made on December 19, 1941, when he informed his guests that after the war, "I shall consider that my life's final task will be to solve the religious problem."⁷⁷

The annihilation of the Christian confessions, which Hitler ultimately contemplated, could be approached only step by step,

indirectly, and under all sorts of guises. Hitler explained to a close associate, Kurt Ludecke, why the Nazis could not move in full force against the churches immediately after taking power: "The political victory can only follow if the fight is concentrated against the fewest possible number of enemies for the time being, the Marxists and the Jews. Then will come the turn of the *Reaktion*, and the end of the Christian Church and the opening of our own temples and shrines."⁷⁸

The source of the enmity between National Socialism and Christianity lay in the utter incompatibility between traditional German religion and the new order that Hitler envisioned for the Third Reich. The Nazi Fuehrer apparently sensed that the conscience of even a feeble Christianity would condemn and reject the ruthless enslavement and exploitation of so-called inferior races of mankind.⁷⁹ Through the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, Hitler determined to erase from the minds of Germans the alien stamp of Judeo-Christian morality which remained distinct in spite of the weakness of the churches.

The fierce instincts of pre-Christian Germany somehow had to

be regained. Since religion was instrumental in defining "the soul of the culture," the creed and confession of Germans should more perfectly conform to their own nature. 80 As the Fuehrer told Kurt Ludecke: "It is a tragedy of the Germanic world that no German 'Heiland' [Savior] was born among us; that our organic spiritual evolution was suddenly and violently interrupted . . . and an alien Asiatic spirit forced upon us. That is the crime that we must repair."81

In many respects the Christian confessions with their morality, their faith, their conscience, and their theology were a far greater obstacle to Hitler's designs than the few hundred thousand defenseless Jews who lived within the Reich. Karl Barth, writing in 1943, perceived the inherent link between Hitler's anti-Semitism and his hostility toward Christianity. Barth reasoned that Hitler was not entirely wrong when he referred to the Jew as the obstacle that prevented the Nazi reconstruction of history, because the Jew was "the symbol of the objective metaphysical fact . . . that the Christian root of western culture is still alive." The Jew, even against his will, was "witness to the continuing vitality of the Old and New Testament revelations, by virtue of which western culture . . . is separated as by an abyss from the inherent godlessness of National Socialism."82

Heinrich Himmler succinctly summed up this incompatibility:

Which of us, wandering through the lovely German countryside and coming unawares upon a Crucifix, does not feel deep in his heart . . . a strange but enduring sense of shame? The gods of our ancestors were different. They were men and carried in their hands a weapon which typified the natural characteristics of our race, namely

readiness to act and self-reliance. How different is yonder pale figure on the Cross, whose passivity and emphasized mien of suffering express only humility and self-abnegation, qualities which, we, conscious of our heroic blood, utterly deny. . . . The corruption of our blood caused by the intrusion of this alien philosophy must be ended.⁸³

Himmler's admission that an alien philosophy could corrupt German blood was all the more astonishing because it blurred the line separating biological and philosophical contamination of a superior race. If an alien philosophy could corrupt German blood, then the bearers of that philosophy were "enemies of the Reich" and as dangerous as the Jews. The physical elimination of the Jews would clear the way for the destruction of Christianity, a much more extensive Semitic influence, and the single greatest contribution of the Jews to Western civilization.

The Barman Synod in 1934 placed the German Evangelical churches

on record opposing the Fuehrer cult. The synod's unequivocal repudiation of false teaching signified a turning point in the history of the modern church. The Barmen Confession stated: "Jesus Christ, as he is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, is the sole word of God that we heed, to which we in life and death put faith in and remain obedient." 84

The Fuehrer's plan to charge the churches with a crime against the nation after the war figured prominently in his plans to destroy the Christian faith. This postwar strategy against the churches was revealed in a lecture by an official of the Reich Main Security Office on September 22, 1941:

The immediate aim: the church must not regain one inch of the ground it has lost. The ultimate aim: destruction of the Confessional Churches to be brought about by the collusion of all material obtained through the intelligence service (*Nachrichtendienst*) activities which will at a given time be produced as evidence for the charge of treasonable activities during the German fight for existence.⁸⁵

This policy statement demonstrated the consistency between Hitler's private sentiments and the long-range planning of his security police.

In the meantime, the Nazis attempted to ensure that the education of the youth "be carried out by those who have rescued Germany from disaster."⁸⁶ As a result, the churches gradually and systematically lost their role in the education of the youth.

History was presented in National Socialist schools as an expanding revelation. Some concepts were revealed from the start, while others were either ignored or kept secret until the authorities

were ready for them to be taught. The Christian religion belonged in the latter category. Many of the earlier histories written by National Socialists said little or nothing about Christianity, but those published after 1942 unmasked the regime's full enmity toward the Christian faith.

The introduction of the Nazi outlook began with the primers prepared for the youngest German schoolchildren. A book of readings quoted an admonition from a Hitler speech in a reading titled "Nothing Is Given Us in Life," suggesting that even the youngest children were ready for a full lesson in social Darwinism:

The truth is harsh and stern, as always. . . . The first thoughts of this truth are that a people must understand that its future lies only in its own strength, in its competence, in its industry and in its courage. For the world does not help, the folk must help itself. One's own

strength is the source of life. It has been given us by the Almighty in order that we may use it, and in it and through it lead the struggle of our lives. 87

Although contrary to the spirit of Christian charity, such sentiments were not blatantly hostile to Christianity, nor were they a direct attack upon the tenets of the faith in the manner that later materials were. Neopaganism crept into the textbooks in numerous ways. For example, schoolchildren were told that early Germans "laid the newborn child on the naked earth, in order that Mother Earth might bestow her powers upon him."88

The Nazi historians reserved their most vociferous anti-Christian diatribes for three historical epochs: the Christianization of the German tribes, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation.

The most persistently anti-Christian history textbook surveyed in this research was *So Ward Das Reich*, published in Frankfurt am Main in 1943 and written principally by Dietrich Klagges, the most influential National Socialist author of historical materials for the *Volksschulen*. The all-embracing racial interpretation of German history contained in this textbook (prepared for *Klasse 6, 7, and 8*) directly conflicted with the Christian view, especially in its treatment of the early German tribes in the late Roman and early medieval periods. Under the heading "German Blood and Alien Spirit," the author described how the Frankish King Chlodwig was introduced to Christianity by his wife. (As in the biblical account, the woman is the bearer of the tainted fruit.) As the "first Germanic king to accept Christianity," Choldwig sanctioned the systematic persecution of those who persisted in the "worship of Aryan

gods,"⁸⁹ thereby delivering the stout Germanic folk into the hands of those who would shape their minds in an alien Judaic mold.

With the exception of the Jew's physical presence, *So Ward Das Reich* portrayed Christianity as the most regrettable alien influence to contaminate the hitherto unsullied Germanic spirit. The Teutons' will to power was thus yoked to the Roman church and diverted to purposes altogether unfitting for the Germans' racial interests. The lesson was clearly presented to German schoolchildren.

"Germanism must bear the cost of the alliance with the papist church." The latter was the obvious benefactor because the alliance placed at the disposal of the church hierarchy a hardy folk whose virile efficiency founded a new Reich and established for the Christian spirit "decisive influence for centuries."⁹⁰

Nevertheless, the Nazi historians wanted to leave no doubt that the fierce Germanic way of life died hard, especially among the Saxons, who formed the nucleus of the resistance to Frankish he-

gemony. According to *So Ward Das Reich*, the Saxons governed themselves in "the old German way," only subordinating themselves in time of war to the authority of a duke (*Herzog*) whom they "elected out of their midst." (Curiously, the Nazis never attempted to reconcile this early German belief in decentralization of authority with their own *Fuehrerprinzip*.) Holding tenaciously to the "ethic and faith of their fathers," the Saxons "desired to know nothing of Christianity, or of cloisters and priests." 91

The Frankish king, Karl the Great (Charlemagne), presented an acute problem to Nazi educators. The earlier texts portrayed his career in Hegelian world-historical dimension though in the traditional manner, as a Germanic hero and a mighty conqueror. Some authors even attempted to treat his career objectively as the following comments from *Die Ewige Strasse* suggest: "When Karl fought for the Saxon lands, German stood against German [a crime in itself to the Nazis]. The Saxons . . . came together in a strong tribal union. . . . The Saxons wanted to remain free peasants and not be submerged in the manner of their Frankish brothers as feudal peasants."92

Ewige Strasse thus presented Karl's Saxon War in good social Darwinist terms as one in which the stronger opponent prevailed. The authors acknowledged Kaiser Karl as a "greater statesman," who triumphed over the Saxons because he was "a more powerful adversary." "In his massive frame an exceedingly strong will was at work. His powerful head, his high forehead and his commanding eyes drew the men under his spell. . . . Thus outwardly the Frankish king was surely a genuine German."93

The authors of *So Ward Das Reich* subjected Karl's achievements

to a much more penetrating gaze, especially his thirty-year "war of brothers" carried out against the Saxons.⁹⁴ "The church had long awaited this moment. [The church officials] feared for their future as long as the German north remained free with its *Lichtglauben* [light-belief], its will to war, and its blood purity." The meeting of the Reichstag in which Karl confronted the Saxon people was dramatically described in order to make a lasting impression upon the youth and to accentuate the fundamental differences between the Germanic and the Christian beliefs. In the following account, Christian bishops and monks accompanied Karl's victorious forces into Germany to explain the new religion to the temporarily vanquished Saxons:

A wooden cross is erected in their midst. the men and women of the Saxons are assembled all around. A priest steps forward and reads from a large parchment paper. Increasingly more gloomy becomes his countenance, increasingly more flashing the eyes of the Saxons. "Every man

should donate to the church the tenth part of his property and his work. Whoever does not allow himself to be baptized, the same shall die; death to whomever does not keep the fast. Death to whomever burns a corpse in the German fashion. Death to whomever. . . . Death to whomever. . . ." The Saxons listen aghast. Full of hate they stare at the priest. Their fists are balled, their bodies taut. Never more will they stoop to this tyrant, they will drive him out of the land. Who will their leader be?

The Saxons found their leader in Widukind, the Hero of Freedom, who sent a rider on a white stallion to herald the peasants to war:

Do you wish to stoop to the hated Franks? Do you wish to be slaves to the church? 'Never! Better death than slaves! Better die than live without honor! . . . We will not crawl to the Cross! Long live freedom! You be our leader in battle and victory! *Heil Herzog Widukind!*" 95

Another text, *Geschichtsbuch für die Deutsche Jugend (Klasse-1)*, recounted with delight the details of the Saxon uprising, "Widukind allowed neither calm nor pause. . . . The torch flew in Frankish courtyards, in churches and cloisters; the fires illuminated the area over the Rhine in the Frankish kingdom."96

The stubborn Saxons experienced repeated defeats and subsequent uprisings but were finally vanquished by Karl's "overwhelming army and iron will." Widukind ultimately "gave up the fight and rejected the faith of his fathers."97 "He bowed to fate and permitted himself to be baptized."98 The Nazi historians wearily recounted the farreaching consequences of this capitulation, as in the following statement from *Deutsche Geschichte in Stichworten*: "Priests established cloisters and churches, chiefly on old Saxon worship sites."99

In spite of the role played by the monasteries in cultural preservation, the Nazi histories denounced the monastic system for shattering the basic Germanic commitments to *Blut und Boden*.

"Monkish Christian ethics came out in opposition to folkish responsibility."¹⁰⁰ Widukind's surrender obviously sealed the spiritual fate of Germans for centuries, but the Nazi historians chafed at the unsettling suggestion that their own stalwart gods were vanquished by a deity who traveled in the humble guise of a Semitic servant preaching love and self-abnegation.

Hitler clung to the belief that the Christianization of the ancient Germans was superficial and incomplete and that even a millennium had been insufficient to remove the instincts of German peasants. The removal of the unnatural veneer of Christian culture was a

foremost task of Nazi education, although the leaders of the twelveyear Reich had only begun the process at the time of its collapse. Yet the urgency with which they undertook the task can be seen in the following comment made by Hitler in a conversation with Hermann Rauschning:

The Ten Commandments have lost their validity. . . . Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing man from the restraint of an intelligence that has taken charge; from the dirty and degrading self-mortification of a chimera called conscience and morality, and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a few can bear. . . . We must . . . place our trust in our instincts. 101

Julius Streicher, editor of the crudely anti-Semitic journal *Der Stürmer*, summed up the feeling of many Nazis in his trenchant observation: "I prefer having no God at all than the same God as the Jews."102

The authors of *So Ward Das Reich* maintained that old Germanic sagas and marches were passed along from generation to generation, even after the formal conversion of German peasants to Christianity. The peasant was "true as his blood," and "very ancient customs of the Germanic light-belief were loyally cultivated and preserved."103 Nazi historians could hardly disguise their defensiveness when they compared their own spiritual inheritance with that of the hated Jews. In all of the reams of their scholarship and investigations, they could not admit that their own ancestors, unlike those of the Jews, abandoned their religious beliefs in the face of conquest and adversity.

Rather than accept the traditional interpretation of the Gothic age

as one of the pinnacles of Teutonic greatness, the authors of *So Ward Das Reich* vehemently condemned its un-German monastic system. For the multitudes, life was a "vale of tears," they insisted, because those who worked and enjoyed themselves or those who sinned were "destined for the flames of hell."¹⁰⁴ The origins of monasticism were "Eastern,"¹⁰⁵ and the monks and nuns "lived according to laws which stood in contradiction to nature and the world." Thus hundreds of thousands of Germans "wasted away behind cloister walls." The authors also lamented that two hundred thousand German knights embarked on the First Crusade and only twenty thousand returned. "One hundred eighty thousand brave men of the best German blood were killed, or died of hunger and thirst, not in battle for their people and fatherland, but in the service of the papist will to power." Under the heading "Germany Is Our Holy Land," the authors repudiated the expending of "so much strength on the retaking of the East." This text concluded with a message of unmistakable rectitude:

"Today our service and faith, our entire passion and power belongs solely and alone to the German Fuehrer, to the German folk and the Greater-German Reich. And for us there is only one fight: the fight for Germany, for our Holy Land. 106

Ironically, the Nazi historians attempted to convince German children that the Gothic cathedral, the foremost symbol of the Christian Middle Ages, received its inspiration from the old pagan Germanic religions. "The sublime Nordic *Licht-und Kampf Glaube* [light and battle faith] has gained form in it once again." The Nazi authors also reinterpreted the characteristic Christian symbolism of the cathedrals to fit Germanic imagery: "The enormous number of the pillars in the interior stretched heavenward as the trees of the German forests. Over the door was found a 'rose,' the replica of the sun as in the Germanic racing wagon. The interior of the dome, gilded halls and conference rooms displayed works of art in the highest perfection."107

In the work of the thirteenth-century mystic theologian, Meister Eckhart, the Nazis discovered a resurgence of the healthy German instincts which monasticism had obscured. Here and elsewhere the authors of such texts as *So Ward Das Reich* juxtaposed un-German Christianity and healthy Germanic beliefs in a continuous battle of faiths. "In his silent cloister cell in Cologne Meister Eckhart sat deeply bowed over Bible and bulls. . . . What do these Latin pieces and forms say to the German people?" Recognizing his deepest yearnings "to be otherwise," Eckhart decided to go outside his cell and to preach out of his German heart and with German words. Eckhart exclaimed: "Hey, that sounds different from the Latin preacher-bawling, which no one understands."108

Although Eckhart was undoubtedly one of the inspirations of Martin Luther's revolt, evaluating Luther's role in German history proved especially difficult for the Nazi writers. The authors of *So Ward Das Reich* called attention to his anti-Semitism and his xenophobia but never honestly came to grips with the issues of his spiritual rebellion.¹⁰⁹ The following quotation juxtaposed once again Germanic freedom and Latin restriction: "The fight begins, the fight of the German conscience against the papist compulsion of conscience, the fight of German spiritual freedom against Roman spiritual proscription." Luther's Germanism was emphasized almost to the exclusion of his Christianity. "Among Germans I was born and I will also serve them," he said.¹¹⁰ "Out of deep primal German wrestling and tribulation," Luther achieved a more authentic faith, and he "belongs in the company of those world-historical revolutionaries . . . who are willing to risk death for their convictions."¹¹¹ The Nazi authors could turn with pride and considerable relish to Luther's

tract "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies," which argued against converting Jews to Christianity. Luther wrote: "They are the real liars and bloodhounds. No more bloodthirsty and vindictive people has the sun ever shone upon. . . . Let them go. We should gladly reward them in order to be rid of them." 112

Even though his mind was saturated with the "alien philosophy," a hero of Luther's magnitude could not be thrust aside easily. Thus despite his usefulness to the Nazis, no textbook that assumed the anti-Christian stance of *So Ward Das Reich* could allow him to go completely unscathed. The authors condemned Luther's "great work" (the translation of the Bible into German), which "drove the Jewish spirit and Jewish thought deeper into the German folk than ever before." They assured their readers that "no German faith" could be built upon "the foundation laid by Luther." 113

Equally perplexing to the Nazi historians was the terrible, permanent sundering of the German folk when neither confessional party gained ascendancy in the great Reformation struggle. The Counter-Reformation also accentuated religious animosities in Germany, with the brutal Catholic reaction against German Protestantism brought by the Jesuit Society, which, according to one text, was created by Ignatius Loyola "and some Jewish friends." The pope at the time was also said to have been "part Jewish." The Reformation was interpreted as an unmitigated tragedy for the German nation. According to *So Ward Das Reich*, the religious strife brought "unspeakable misfortune and weakness to our people for centuries. We overcome this when all of us together find faith in Germany and her Fuehrer." Thus the Nazi antidote was the substitution of one faith for another, the Nazis'

own faith constituting an ersatz religion which satisfied the longing for meaning and direction in life in the midst of chaos.¹¹⁴

The legacy of the Reformation and the passions it engendered continued to thwart for centuries the unity desired by fanatical German nationalists. Three centuries passed before Otto von Bismarck's unification of Germany in 1871, but even then the Catholic Center party (*Zentrum*) successfully frustrated the Iron Chancellor's efforts to weld the nation together in an unbreakable union. Battling an institution that had only recently proclaimed the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope, the German government and its "blood and iron" leader would ultimately have no choice but to "go to Canossa."¹¹⁵ The *Zentrum*, according to one text, established, with the "encouragement of the pope," a political union that commanded German Catholics to "oppose the Protestant Kaiser." Furthermore, the *Zentrum*, with foreign support and encouragement, deliberately aggravated "the most painful schism of the German people." Its

members considered the papacy their highest loyalty and the Roman church "more important than the Reich." 116 Even the unprecedented power of Bismarck's Reich could not match the international forces of Catholicism.

Bismarck's capitulation to the Vatican meant that "the German people will later pay for it" (presumably in defeat in World War I).¹¹⁷ Another history text, *Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes von 1871 bis zur Gegenwart*, accused the papacy of desiring to "dominate the souls of men as the church in the Middle Ages had done." The real goal of the *Zentrum* was "not religious but political: the Reich should be weak."¹¹⁸

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the Nazis saw the fight against Christianity as a part of the desperate global struggle waged by Aryans against the inherent degeneracy of the Semitic world view. An offshoot of the latter view, Christianity was clearly a rival for the German people's allegiance. Hence the Nazis yearned for the people's acceptance of a metaphysical system which was compatible with the political aims of their movement. The demolition of Christianity would clear the way for more robust Teutonic ideals and would permit the regime to substitute its own interpretation of history for the former faith. Christianity and Germanism were portrayed as polar opposites: the stifling, unnatural worship of an alien (even Semitic) God that enslaved man versus the empowering, instinctive worship of the German God of heroic nationalism that glorified man.

The conversion of Germans to Christianity had fostered unheroic Semitic qualities and had rendered the people inadequate instruments for the furtherance of German domination. Christianity

also placed the Germans at the mercy of a papal will to power, which for almost a millennium diverted their energies to alien purposes.

The new textbooks pressed adherents of the resurrected Germanic creed into combat with those of the traditional faith. The outcome of this titanic struggle, the Nazi historians believed, would decide the spiritual destiny of the German people for all time to come.

Ethnocentrism and German History

The wind of the spirit, that blows freely through Europe, stops at the Rhine, and a new wind of the German spirit takes its place.

Ernest Barker,*NIETZSCHE AND TREITSCHKE*

The values of German *Kultur* became, in the view of Nazi historians, peculiar to their own folk and, at times, final and absolute. Because Germany composed a world of its own, foreign peoples and customs were scorned and despised by those preparing German history textbooks. The Nazis' xenophobia grew naturally out of the

racial myth, Germany's historic weakness and tardiness in developing a strong centralized government, and the bitter wars in which German soil was ravaged by foreign troops.

The calamitous Thirty Years' War left a legacy of both hatred for foreigners and self-pity for the weak German arms which failed to prevent the desecration of the fatherland. In the sheer magnitude of its horrors, no European war until the holocaust of 1914¹⁸ approached this seventeenth-century struggle, and, despite the widespread European involvement in the earlier war, almost all of its destructiveness was inflicted upon the Germans. ¹¹⁹ Nazi textbooks spared none of the gruesome details in chronicling a struggle that unleashed the four horsemen of the apocalypse throughout the land.

The Nazis provided inflated statistics of the war dead and the physical damages, but these figures were no more exaggerated than those provided by many Western textbooks until more recent studies reduced them. One Nazi text stated that "the greatest part" of the German people was destroyed by the war and that at its conclusion, "of eighteen million, five million still lived a wretched and apathetic life. . . . National pride was crushed underfoot; foreign customs, foreign clothing, foreign speech got the upper hand."¹²⁰ Although the Thirty Years' War was a European civil war in which killing and plundering were grim but universal norms, the Nazi writers implied that Germans were innocent victims of foreign malice. The destruction of Magdeburg by the army of the Catholic League was described as follows:

The weak defense was overrun and the fortress captured. A colossal fire broke out, while raving soldiers of the Croats and Walloons [both

non-German groups] plundered, tortured, desecrated and murdered 30,000 of the defenseless citizens. One of the richest of the cities of Germany was reduced to a cathedral, a cloister, and some huts of fishermen in the soot and ashes.¹²¹

The most disastrous consequence of the war, according to the Nazi historians, was the permanent maiming of the German will to power: "While Germany, the Nordic 'Coreland' of the world, lay mortally wounded on the ground, mighty unified states were built around the rim of Europe, which partitioned the world among themselves." The writers of *So Ward Das Reich* discussed at length the successes of Germany's neighbors: Spain's colonial power, France's attempts at European hegemony under Louis XIV, and Russia's entrance into the ranks of the European Great Powers. "All of the rim powers had an advantage which Germany as the coreland could not exploit: they had on at least one side free access to the world." The

German authors were particularly envious of England's fortuitous position, which gave it control of the northeast approaches to Europe, an advantage the Anglo-Saxons exploited "to drive German ships of the Hanseatic League from the seas." 122

Analyses by the Nazis of the early modern period also generated considerable outrage at the invasion by French culture (clothes, speech, educational ideas), which came in the wake of the Thirty Years' War. To counteract this "overestimation of foreigners," the Nazi authors planned entire units of study around such themes as "the freedom from things French."123

The familiar specter of Germans set upon by a world of enemies appeared again during Frederick the Great's Seven Years' War (1756-63). Abandoned by his English ally, Frederick struggled on alone, only to expedite by the force of Prussian arms England's absorption of the greater part of France's colonial empire. It was through "Frederick's heroism that the great colonial state was formed."124

The most sophisticated and cleverly manipulated hatred of a foreign people was the Nazi treatment of the English in *Hirts Englandkundliches Lesebuch*, an edited collection of materials arranged in chronological sequence and written mostly by English authors, all of whom cast English character and motives in a particularly unsavory light. The common denominator of the readings was "English hypocrisy": the discrepancy between righteous pretensions and cold-blooded, pragmatic actions. For example, the German editor included excerpts from George Bernard Shaw's *Man of Destiny* to demonstrate that "every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes

him master of the world." When an Englishman covets something, Shaw argued, he "never tells himself that he wants it" but waits until a "burning conviction" assures him that "it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who have got the thing that he wants." Only then does the Englishman become "irresistible," even to the point that he "conquers and annexes half the world" as a champion of national independence. Shaw concluded: "There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle; he fights you on patriotic principle; he robs you on business principles."¹²⁵ Or as an English newspaper explained in 1897: "Were Germany destroyed tomorrow, the day after tomorrow there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer."¹²⁶

The Nazis traced the source of English hypocrisy to the saturation by the alien Calvinistic spirit of Puritanism. Thus was a Nordic people's blood corrupted. Indeed, the English stood as a historic

example of what could happen to a master race that failed to instill in its people a proper appreciation of racial consciousness. The archfiend was Oliver Cromwell, "who combined the Old Testament Jewish spirit of Calvinism with the Nordic blood of his people and thereby created contemporary Britain." Nor had the English spirit failed to affect Germany. Said one German: "Is not a great part of our hysterical passion for rational judgment and sensitivity English sickness." 127 The Nazi editor assembled a considerable number of English authors to support his claim.

John Milton's *Areopagitica* upheld the claim that the English were the new chosen people of God:

Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Zion, should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all Europe? . . . What does He then but reveal Himself to His servants, and as His manner is, first to His Englishmen?128

From James Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* came the idea that England was "given as a magistrate of God to mankind." Harrington added:

To ask whether it is lawful for a commonwealth to aspire to the empire of the world, is to ask whether it is lawful for her to do her duty or to put the world into a better condition than it was before. . . . Cursed is he that does the work of the Lord negligently."129

Robert Breffault in *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1940) identified religion as the source of English hypocrisy. Puritanism, according to Breffault, was entirely unnatural for a Nordic man.130

The personal analyses of English character contained in the selections from Fischer's *Lesebuch* were particularly devastating. "The worst, the most abominable thing about the English is that they are nice." The charm of their spiritual confidence "is the mark of that Freemasonry and teamwork spirit which the English public-school education reproduces." The endless variety of religious sects reveals that the Englishman prefers "to find his own way to heaven, and has no scruple in leaving the beaten path with a few friends to accompany him." Faddism was called by the Nazis a national defect against which the "English mind is singularly ill-protected."¹³¹

The readings contained a combination of jealousy and awe that such a sprawling network of power as the British Empire had come into being. One article included a lengthy description of the empire's immensity a quarter of the globe and more than two hundred units:

"A network of cables, wireless stations, and steamer communications link together all these varied regions and peoples of primitive, medieval and modern civilization with the little misty, northern island on the outskirts of the world." 132

The Germans' hatred of England obviously did not preclude an attempt to follow her footsteps to greatness. The rapid partition of Africa compounded German frustrations, however, because the continent was virtually absorbed in little more than a decade and a half after the Reich got into the race. The Nazis believed Germany was mistreated by her European rivals. Although her colonial acquisitions were modest, Germany was continually labeled an "uneasy *Nimmersatt*" (one with a gluttonous, insatiable appetite).¹³³

The German editor of *Hirts Englandkundliches Lesebuch* gave full coverage to atrocities committed by the English during several centuries of their history. Such accounts served a dual function: they reinforced the view of English hypocrisy and reassured the pupils that Germany was not the only country accused of monstrous crimes. To give credibility to the charges of atrocity, the accounts were written by Englishmen and taken from English publications. For example, the Nazis reprinted the parliamentary speech in which William Pitt of Chatham reproached his own countrymen for turning loose "savage hell-hounds against our brethren and countrymen in America, of the same language, laws, liberties, and religion, endeared to us by every tie that should sanctify humanity."¹³⁴

The most graphically sickening account included in this work was the report of the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1857.

According to the London *Times*, the British army blew forty of the mutineers "away from our guns" in the presence of the whole force as a "fearful but necessary example":

Three sides of a square were formed, ten guns pointed outward, the sentence of the court was read, a prisoner bound to each gun, the signal given, and the salvo fired. Such a scene I hope never again to witness human trunks, legs, arms, etc. flying about in all directions. Trials were going on and the mutineers will never forget the lesson taught at Peskawar.

In another reported Indian outrage, a British general ordered his men to fire into a meeting of 15,000 to 20,000 Indians at Bagh, killing 379 and wounding 1,200 others.¹³⁵

The portrayal of the career of Cecil Rhodes presented another amazing example of the tendency of the Nazis to condemn their own values when they appeared in other nationalities. The traits so warmly embraced by Hitler were cruelly attacked when they were

manifested in the great imperialist prime minister of Cape Colony. Fischer's *Lesebuch* quoted a contemporary of Rhodes who said that of all the men of his time "in hardness and realism, there is none who approaches quite so closely to the popular conception of the superman." Rhodes was called "one of those natural aristocrats for whom the restriction of everyday morality have no meaning." The reporting of Rhodes's exploits left some question that the Nazis secretly admired his audacity and wished to emulate his grandiose schemes. His dreams were of "continents" and of "conquering a country equal in size . . . to France and Spain and the German Empire put together, and having it baptized with his own name." And had Rhodes "formulated a gospel," according to the author, he would have "altered 'God is love' to 'God is power.'" 136

Another textbook claimed that Cecil Rhodes "paid no attention to human life" and "unscrupulously crushed underfoot the happiness of others; any means was to him correct, if only he reached his goal."137 Hitler's morality was amazingly similar to this description of Rhodes's. In fact, the Fuehrer privately expressed admiration for British imperial methods and stated in one of his "Secret Conversations": "They are an admirably trained people. They worked for three hundred years to assure themselves the domination of the world for two centuries."138

The British cruelties in the Boer War (1899-1902) were laid bare by the German editor of the *Lesebuch*, who quoted at great length from the parliamentary debates of February 26, 1901, and March 1902. The horrors of concentration camp life were vividly described:

In the prison camps and so-called refugee camps of the Orange Free

State the women and children of those who are out on commando, and who declined to surrender, are put on half rations and informed that they will be kept on that allowance until their husbands or brothers come in and surrender. Is there any parallel for the cruelty and meanness of that in the whole history of war? [There soon would be.] For my part, I never read of any proceeding so mean and cruel and cowardly to endeavor to overcome these men whom you cannot, although you are ten to one, beat in the field to seek to force and intimidate them into surrender by starving their women and children.¹³⁹

The inclusion of such material in a book of readings for German students defies rational explanation. Equally baffling was the inclusion of an article entitled "The White Australian Policy," which presented a defense of racial policies quite compatible with the Nazis' own

demands for racial purity. An Australian was quoted as saying that "any sacrifice is worth making which keeps Australia white." 140

A number of references were made to the use of black troops against Germans in World War I, although the accounts seemed more concerned with engendering fear of the African than with establishing his inferiority. The authors of one text called attention to the "gigantic black sharpshooters" in whose eyes "still flashed the fiery glow of murder-lust behind the cowardly anxiety of their trifling nigger life."141

A common view expressed in Nazi textbooks was that Germany's enemies sought before, during, and after World War I to destroy her growing power:

England wanted the annihilation of German world commerce, the German sea power and German colonial empire; France [desired] Alsace-Lorraine and, if possible, the breakup of the Bismarckian Reich; Russia [desired] the dismemberment of Austria, the suzerainty over the Slavic peoples and Constantinople. All these were aims which could be reached only through war.142

There was both pride in Germany's performance and disgust for Germany's foes:

Four years the German soldier had taken on all comers; fought, suffered, hungered, froze, bled, and again and again fought. Four years the enemy had assaulted him with Negroes and Indians, with Cossacks and Tartars and almost all races of the world. Peoples who hardly knew where Germany was, almost two-thirds of humanity, stood in the fight against him.143

The foreign conspiracy to dismember Germany continued throughout the fourteen years of the Weimar Republic and beyond.

After Hitler came into office, the enemies of the German nation took urgent action: "In the spring of 1933 assembled in the Freemason temple in Paris leading Freemasons, Jewish and Marxist 'emigres' from Germany, the Polish ambassador and English Freemasons from the government. They resolved to assault Germany militarily when it threatened to become too strong."¹⁴⁴

Under the Nazis, German ethnocentrism became an obsession: xenophobia. Everything foreign was viewed as a threat. Perhaps most despised and feared were the qualities exhibited by foreigners which most resembled those of their German counterparts. Nazi authors assumed that expansion at the expense of Germany was the elemental drive of foreign peoples and that obsession with Germany governed their leaders' actions.

Rationalism and Democracy

The sword will come into its own again, and the pen, after fourteen years of exaggerated prestige, will be put in its place. The sword has lain rusting in the corner for fourteen years in German countries, while the pen has had the stage to itself; and, as a result, we have gone to the dogs.

Ewald Banse, *GERMANY PREPARES FOR WAR*

The primacy of reason and the primacy of the blood were mutually exclusive. The Nazi attack upon rationalism was both a tactic to indoctrinate the nation's youth and an assault upon one of the pillars of European civilization. An instructional booklet prepared by the Nazis for the elite schools attempted to distinguish between the National Socialist world view and the "liberal, Marxist . . . milieu theory" imported into Germany from the West, which asserted that man was merely "the product of conditions."

Vehemently rejecting the milieu theory, the Nazis maintained that "man shapes the environment in the struggle of life out of the powers and worth of his blood."

National Socialist educators juxtaposed the principles of liberalism and their own cherished certainties: willpower, the creativity of personality, and the feeling for community. Liberal education, according to Hans Schemm, spawned unbridled individualism which destroyed the unity of men. It wrenched Germans "away from fatherland and homeland, from folk and God." In addition, analytical psychology and psychoanalysis "Jewish psychology" dissected man's spiritual life and caused the "dismemberment of the soul." Schemm wrote: "That is as precisely true as if one plucked a flower apart. It is then in no way a flower any longer. At the moment in which I attempt to dissect the soul,

the existence of the soul will be denied altogether." 145 The analytical study of man led inevitably to mechanism, materialism, and Marxism; in short, to the negation of racial consciousness.

Schemm's thesis recalls Schiller's poem, "German Greatness," which repudiated the "brilliance" of French materialistic culture in favor of the "sacredness" of German *Kultur*. The latter appropriated to the individual a universal spirit inaccessible to the Western rationalist mind. That rationalist mind was caricatured by Helmut Stellrecht as one whose principal trait "intellectualism" damages the vital tension, exhausts and diminishes the will, instead of preparing the intellectual for his difficult calling through an intensification of the vital powers and the will." 146

In the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, the function of intelligence was not the discovery of pure knowledge, that is, abstract truth, but the obedience to the mystical truths revealed in the blood. 147 Feeling and instinct replaced intellect as the nexus of all educational en-

deavors. This rejection of finite judgment had less to do with the *ratio* of Hegel than with romanticism and medieval notions of loyalty, mutual obligation, and fealty. As has already been shown, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and others provided spiritual nourishment for the Nazi theorists. They could never accept Descartes's famous axiom "*cogito ergo sum*" because, according to Theodor Wilhelm, such a principle denied man everything that was not reason and divested his soul of its "great impulses." Wilhelm continued, "You do not grasp after truth with cold-blooded reason, but with the passion of a glowing heart, in which reason ranges side by side with will, courage, imagination and enthusiasm." In the same vein, Bernhard Rust, the Nazi commissioner of education, wrote, "Only he who has *will power* can come to grips with knowledge; only he who has *purpose* can understand beginnings." 148

After throwing the cultural foundations of rationalism overboard, the Nazis faced the perplexing task of constructing a viable philosophical synthesis upon the ideational quagmire of emotion. In the absence of a well-founded cultural heritage, the Nazis designed a substitute a primitive ideological patchwork of the ideas of such obtuse thinkers as Alfred Rosenberg, whose heavy-laden prose frequently thwarted the most determined efforts at comprehension. The following is an example of Rosenberg's epistemology, taken from his book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, officially regarded as second only to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a seminal work of the new era: "The mind does not derive any abstract rule from without, nor does it move toward any external aim; nowise does it proceed out of itself, but comes to itself." 149

Those Hitler appointed to direct the regime's educational program

were as vocal as their master in rejecting the rationalist tradition. Ernst Krieck wrote, "We perceive and acknowledge no truth for the sake of truth, no science for the sake of science." Bernhard Rust declared, "The discerning man does not live on an island of intellectual contemplation; he lives by perceiving *right* in the heart of the universe."¹⁵⁰ Joseph Goebbels, the erudite but mercurial apostle of the Germanic faith, identified other antirationalist elements in National Socialism: "Fascism is by its essence anti-liberal not only in its results but in its spiritual principle. Fascism is . . . anti-pacifist. . . . It destroys the false humanitarian ideal of the liberal democracy to its roots, and replaces it by manly heroism."¹⁵¹

The Nazis' rejection of rationalism as an educational doctrine did not mean that they necessarily eschewed rational arguments in the defense of their own policies. Even irrationality cannot depend solely upon irrational supports. Nevertheless, the official explanations of National Socialist doctrines proved no less objectionable than the

doctrines themselves. One sentiment frequently voiced was that Hitler's movement could be comprehended only by those within the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁵² By such reasoning, of course, reconciliation with the new Germany could come only if the world abandoned its most cherished intellectual traditions.

Such mystical, romantic ideas as the "blood and soil" myths could never gain acceptance if propagated by objectivity and half-measures. Only a ruthlessly one-sided presentation would suffice. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote: "Poison is countered only by an antidote. . . . Faith is harder to shake than knowledge." Upheavals of the sort contemplated by Hitler could not be set in motion by scientific knowledge but required a "fanaticism which inspired the masses and sometimes a hysteria which drove them forward."¹⁵³

Barren intellect, as well as every area of human life, needed to be fertilized by the warmth and emotion of the heart. Theodor Wilhelm advocated a return to Pestalozzi's principle, which emphasized those values which ignited from the "spark that leaps from soul to soul." After 1933, truth sprang from a new source: Adolf Hitler. Hans Schemm, speaking to the faculty at the University of Munich, cautioned academicians to bring their teaching into conformity with the spirit of National Socialism.¹⁵⁴ And Martin Heidegger, the eminent philosopher appointed rector of Freiburg, was even more brazen: "The much vaunted 'academic freedom' will be driven from the German University, for this freedom was spurious. . . . It meant a lack of concern, arbitrariness in one's aims and intentions, license in acting and not acting."¹⁵⁵

With the appointed leaders of the German academic community in such a state of mental apoplexy, the turn away from rationally

derived truth was completed.

The textbooks blamed the Enlightenment for negating the healthy spirit of freedom that emerged during the Renaissance. The "domination of reason" brought a "mechanistic conception of life" disruptive of the organic unity of the people.¹⁵⁶ Yet the authors of a *Klasse-7* text surprisingly admitted that the "fight of the Enlightenment for the freedom of the individual personality was historically necessary," although the "spirit of individualism" eventually undermined "the old German civic spirit."¹⁵⁷ The achievements of a Krupp, for example, would never have occurred "within the mercantile system," nor would the contributions of a Kant or a Goethe "have been possible under the domination of orthodox priests." The state has a higher task than "the security of the life and independence of citizens." It must guarantee the purity of the race, as well as the health, strength, and achievements of the folk. "The nature of the state is power; the content of history is the struggle of the folk for power."¹⁵⁸

The Nazis included economic liberalism in their rejection of rationalist principles. Laissez-faire was denigrated for providing only free competition and for promoting the attitude that "everyone should take care of himself and take risks." In the place of this false stress upon individuality, the Nazis insisted upon "the obligation to the generality." The political danger from economic liberalism was also enormous: the threat of world domination through the technology of the bourgeois state and the Jews. 159

The Industrial Revolution spread from Britain to France and finally to Germany around 1850, but in Germany its emphasis changed. Men such as Friedrich List "never thought of themselves but of the community . . . to make their fatherland as well off as England." The Krupps, Borsigs, and Harkorts were said to have been of the same opinion. 160

The original Nordic faith gradually paled as wealthy Germans succumbed to the curse of gold. Under the heading "Gold as God," one textbook described how, decade by decade, industrialization began to eat away at the vitality of the German people. "At the end there stood the catastrophe of the German people of 1918 until 1932." 161 "Everyone thought only of himself. One worked no more for the sake of the work, but for profit; one wanted quickly to become rich. . . . That the state also had the duty to demand, the liberal man denied. *Many in the new Reich knew no longer any ideal for which to fight, to suffer, to die. They had only one God: gold.*" 162

Worship of the golden calf (with its Jewish connotations) brought "interest slavery." The Nazis identified among the rich bankers and creditors a phalanx of anonymous enemies whom they could

denounce. Perhaps the real ogre was not economic liberalism but the anonymity of modernity. In the modern industrial state the employer "had no interests in the welfare of the worker and his work, so long as only high dividends could obtain for the invested capital. . . . One often did not know which persons or groups had the most shares and therewith the deciding influence in the undertaking; the capital shares were 'anonymous.'"163 The German students should not have despaired because their history books assured them that "in the German Revolution heroism triumphed over bourgeois-liberal thinking."164 In addition, National Socialism overturned the "Jewish emancipation" foisted upon the world by the French Revolution.165

The political impotence of liberalism was repeatedly ridiculed by the Nazi authors. Their classic example was the Frankfurt Parliament (1848/49), during which German liberals made futile efforts to unify the Reich. Under the heading "Through Speeches and Majority Decisions No Reich Will Be Created," the writers mocked the statecraft of scholars, poets, and other men of learning.166

The Nazi disparagement of German liberals and their political parties continued through their coverage of Bismarck's Reich. One author condemned "traitorous hirelings" in the Reichstag who prepared the way for the monstrous crime of 1918, commenting, "Also, in almost all parties sat Jews." 167 (As has been shown previously, the Nazis believed that a mere handful of Jews could spoil an entire enterprise.) Despite the weakness of democratic forces in Germany, the writers of the Nazi texts charged the political parties with complicity in Germany's defeat in World War I: "The majority parties . . . used this emergency for their purposes. They finally demanded: all power to the Reichstag. Because of this objective they could support Wilson's demand to establish a democratic government."168

In 1919 the Constitutional Assembly at Weimar adopted a Western model instead of creating a constitution in accordance with the German way. As a result, "Germany became a democratic, parliamentary republic."169 Penned by "the Jew Preuss," under the pretense of giving Germany "freedom and independence," the document in fact brought "the domination of Jewry, the Freemasons, and their party clique. What is born out of foreign spirit and fulfilled of foreign spirit, must remain eternally foreign to the people." In short, the Weimar Constitution "became the seal for the enslavement of Germany."170 The new republican government denied almost everything that the Nazis held dear. For any final decision, it was necessary first to obtain "the consent of the majority of something like five hundred Reichstag deputies." The Nazis resented that deputies of a German Reichstag could contend for "over two generations" that "for modern man to fight with weapons [was] unworthy." Thus all disputes were solved

"through votes and negotiations," and everyone had "equal rights, equal freedom to state his will in secret elections." The inadequacy of democratic procedures was confirmed (for the Nazis) by the constant hassle and reshuffling of Weimar governments twenty-three in the period from 1919 to 1932.¹⁷¹

The solution one text offered to this problem was both blunt and biased: "Down with the parties! That was the first task." The second task was similar: "Down with state sovereignty!"¹⁷² Another text advised: "Democracy must be defeated with its own weapons."¹⁷³

Decisive power was placed in the hands of the Fuehrer by the Enabling Act of March 23, 1933, a date which marked one of the swiftest and most complete transformations of modern times. Immediately upon taking office, Hitler set about remodeling all of the institutions of the Reich, taking care, however, not to proceed in the manner of a dogmatic revolutionist. Instead of abrogating the hated Weimar Constitution, Hitler refashioned the Reich's institutions through

successive modifications of and additions to existing structures. 174 In the electoral campaign of February and March 1933, Hitler declined to outline a specific program but instead launched a crusade against the leftist parties, the Social Democrats and the communists. The newly appointed Fuehrer charged that the Marxist parties had destroyed the spiritual unity of the people, ruined the peasantry, and brought the terrible scourge of unemployment upon the German working class. To put an end to the Marxist-inspired chaos, Hitler demanded: "Give me four years."175

The Social Democratic party was voluntarily dissolved on June 22, 1933, after its leader, Paul Löbe, was accused of treasonous contacts with Paris and Prague. And with the conclusion of the Concordat with the German government, the Vatican acquiesced to the suppression of the Catholic *Zentrum*. Thus after less than six months in office, the Hitler cabinet was able to declare the NSDAP the sole party in Germany. The attitude of the Nazis was summed up in one of their history texts: "Ja! Fuehrer, we follow you!"176

The authors of a *Klasse-5* text pulled a sleight of hand when they informed their readers that in the election of March 5, 1933, "the government won 52 percent of all votes." Although these percentages were technically correct, "the government" at the time included the DNVP (German National Peoples party), in addition to the Nazis. The authors omitted any mention of this coalition, and in the same paragraph they shifted back to their discussion of the National Socialist party.¹⁷⁷ It would have been too much to expect readers of a *Klasse-5* text to determine for themselves that the Nazis alone did not command 52 percent of the votes. One

conclusion was unmistakable, however: the Nazis, despite all of their contempt for majorities, felt a need to demonstrate that more than half of the German people legitimized their rule.

National Socialists also went to great lengths to reassure German students that theirs was not a revolution like the one that launched the bloody French upheaval in the 1790s: "In general the SS exercised wonderful discipline. On none of the enemies who had inflicted so much blood sacrifice upon the National Socialist movement was petty revenge exercised. It was the least bloody revolution the world had ever seen."¹⁷⁸

The texts also insisted that "Hitler's leadership had become no dictatorship." The new Reich was called by one source a "refined type of democracy, in which the power mandate of the people" confirmed the authority of the leader. Furthermore, this mandate was renewed by four plebiscites during the first six years of the regime. Positive returns of 98 percent, 90 percent, 99 percent, and 99 percent were achieved. "The great final goal was reached; Hitler and Germany

had become one and the same; Germany was united." 179 Another author assured his readers that because Hitler's power was based upon "the trust of the people," it did not constitute "absolutism and dictatorship."180

The Nazis were ecstatic when in 1935 the Saarlanders voted by a 90 percent majority in a League-sanctioned plebiscite to reunite with Germany. "In spite of snow and rain they stood in long lines before the polling places. Sick and weak were brought in wheel-chairs." The overwhelming German victory was celebrated "by thousands singing the Dutch Hymn of Thanksgiving into the night. . . . All of Saarbrücken is . . . a single sea of flags. . . . 'Fuehrer, we did our duty! We are now home!'"181

The annual September rites at Nuremberg, called the *Reichparteitage*, served as a mystical reaffirmation of the Fuehrer's authority and the party's control. The *Parteitage* were called a "truthful representation of the people."182 But they were for the faithful much more than that, a kind of oracle where the Word was received gladly. "There the Fuehrer spoke to render an account of that which he in the elapsed year had achieved; then he assigned the work for the next year. Hundreds of thousands drew out of these Nuremberg days power and faith for new work, new struggle."183 The bond between Fuehrer and folk was thus sealed and reaffirmed.

The unanimity coveted by the Nazis placed their ideology closer to Rousseau's general will than to Locke's social contract. When stripped of its verbiage, "refined democracy" paid no homage to the will of the majority but rather bowed down to worship what

Hans Schemm called the Nazis' "unified goal-clear will on all spheres of life."¹⁸⁴

The Nazis' texts clearly delineated the boundaries between Germany's friends and enemies in the world. Rigid definitions identified the in-group and out-group relationships for students. Nazi exclusiveness precluded all accommodations with foreign races, ideas, and customs. The schools were required to combat the foe whether it be a racial, ideological, religious, or philosophical opponent. Rarely, if ever, has a national educational system been called upon to undertake such a massive demolition effort. The success of Hitler's effort would have meant the permanent displacement of the Western value system in Germany.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

It requires all the force of a young missionary idea to raise our people up again, to free them from the snares of this international serpent

Adolf Hitler, *MEIN KAMPF*

The National Socialist revolution ushered in the most fundamental alteration of educational ideals the German nation had ever experienced. Even Luther's "House of Learning" and Alexander von Humboldt's educational efforts pale by comparison (although Luther's and Humboldt's influence was longer-lived). The brevity of the Nazi educational experiment should not obscure the profound significance of this process, which converted educators into priests of the new creed and made them responsible for galvanizing sentiment for the regime's political goals.

The National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, as depicted in the German history textbooks, was a juvenile apocalyptic vision. Textbooks prepared for young children and adolescents by necessity appear callow to the sophisticated reader. But the argument that the Nazis naturally employed a simplistic approach overlooks another, more crucial factor: the impassioned tenor of the historical materials they selected in order to arouse the juvenile gang mentality. The adolescent nature of National Socialism facilitated the acceptance by juveniles of their historical writings and elevated their ideology in their eyes.

Despite the emotionality of its appeal and the absence of intellectual integrity, National Socialist history was both

teleological and messianic: it was one of the myriad secular ideologies which emerged in the West after the French Revolution. But as a metaphysical system, National Socialism built its foundation on sand on the shifting terrain of a single man's ambition for power and domination. The fascination with the temporal brilliance of Hitler's meteoric career camouflaged a hollow and idolatrous but well-manicured cult of personality.

The immature and untried Nazi educational ideas were spun directly from the political movement. That they were spawned by a colorful and dramatic ideology cannot be denied, especially since the interest generated by the Nazi histories often equaled or exceeded that of the liveliest fiction. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to expect young children to have resisted the appeal of a brisk journey through the past: from the gods of Valhalla, to the *Germania* of Tacitus, to the Prussia of Frederick the Great, and eventually to the very pinnacle of German history, Hitler's Third Reich. The balance and objectivity required of history writers in the liberal states prohibited their matching the attraction of the Nazi histories, couched as they were in strongly prophetic tones. But for the Nazis the enterprise was a life-and-death political mobilization, not a serious intellectual inquiry.

The central theme of the history written by the National Socialists can be briefly stated: to arouse in the student a sense of Germanism (*Deutschtum*) in accordance with the most exclusive definition of the term, which would kindle the urgent desire to secure Germany's permanent hegemony in the world. The history textbooks drew distinct boundaries between German and non-German nationalities and projected for youth the sacred meaning of preserving their unique racial qualities.

National Socialist history was apocalyptic to the extent that it embodied meaning and mission. For the student of history, neither detachment nor interpretation was allowed, nor were questions left unanswered. A cosmic drama, National Socialist history was complete, including the coming of a messiah, a providentially appointed Fuehrer who led his beleaguered *Herrenvolk* out of the

wilderness of defeat and disintegration. Yet the drama continued into the future, therefore demanding and justifying intervention to ensure the triumph of the racial mission.

The Nazis considered education an exercise for development of human will. Because all living things struggled to overcome a hostile environment, the school's function was to equip Germans to prevail in this struggle for existence. National Socialists, acutely anxious about the future of their race, decreed an education that would equip and unite youth to prevent the reversal of evolution. The urgent tone and the melancholy obsession with death and sacrifice found in Nazi history grew out of this apprehension.

Existing studies have not sufficiently explored the contention between determinism and voluntarism within the Nazi ideology. This conflict was never resolved in the Nazi histories, but the authors favored the voluntaristic, or even metaphysical theory: hence the urgency, the activism, the dynamism. Although the dynamism of National Socialism has drawn considerable comment from scholars,

the movement's violence has never been adequately explained as the outcome of tensions within the philosophy itself. Perhaps the impatience of Nazi leaders and the destructiveness of the movement simply mirrored the philosophical tensions tormenting the party's founders. Both the leaders and the movement appeared to be frenziedly racing against time.

This study has focused attention upon these philosophical tensions, the most important of which are summarized below.

1. *The contention within the National Socialist Philosophy between the physical and the metaphysical*, or between what Shakespeare called "fate and metaphysical aid." This fundamental tension had a variety of manifestations, which this research suggests arose from a common source: the fear of a reversal of the evolutionary process. The metaphysical character of the National Socialist struggle for survival was expressed in the views of one Nazi educational theorist:

It is in its deepest sense a fight of the natural against the unnatural, the "committed" man against the "uncommitted." The committed man is the man who lives in the old commitments which proceed from nature, which signifies creativity. He is best characterized through the peasant. But the uncommitted man has lost these old commitments. He is uncreative in the extreme and is characterized by the city dweller. . . . Each true form grows out of commitment, just as the plant grows out of the earth, and out of the rhythm of the cosmos. 1

The strident tone of the Nazi authors reflected their extreme apprehension that superior genes alone would not insure the triumph of the racial concept. The anxiety that "superior" Germans would foolishly sell their birthright was reflected in the comment

of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a nineteenth-century "racial scholar" and patron saint of the Nazis:

When we see these splendid "barbarians" glowing with youth, free, making their entry into history endowed with all those qualities which fit them for the very highest places, when we realize how they . . . contaminate their pure blood by mixing with the impure races of slave-born . . . then we have to acknowledge for the future fact that every day adds new enemies and dangers to those which already exist. . . . We, the most learned of all men, and yet ignorant beyond all others of the world around us, the greatest discoverers and yet stricken with chronic blindness.²

Perhaps the "final solution" was necessary only because Nazi leaders, in their paranoid anxiety, doubted that their people, when left to their own devices, would preserve the race. Despite the racial pride and the chauvinism in Nazi textbooks, lacking was the confidence contained in the motto of another people: "There will always be an England." Hitler feared that without ceaseless vigilance, Germany would be plunged into oblivion and that the earth would be consumed by microbes, to "revolve in ether," devoid of life. Unlike Marxism, National Socialism claimed no inexorable law of history which would assure its triumph. In fact, man's susceptibility to molding by his environment and his responsibility for molding it were the two sharp edges of the Nazis' vicious sword.

2. *The problem of determinism and voluntarism.* The Nazi philosophy demanded fanatical mass intervention to refashion human society. The contention between the polar opposites of determinism and voluntarism was most graphically illustrated in the interpretation of the downfall of nations. The official National Socialist doctrine insisted that nations declined when the Nordic "culture creators" diluted their blood by mixing it with that of "culture destroyers" and "culture preservers" (biological determinism). A careful reading of the Nazi history textbooks, however, uncovers amendments and qualifications to the official doctrine there were more invidious "corrupters of the blood" than bad genes, such as alien ideas (voluntarism). For example, the English represented a Nordic racial group which, though racially "pure," was weakened by Semitic ideas (in the form of Calvinistic, Old Testament religious dogmas). Philipp Hördt wrote: "A people does not endure because children are born." A nation survives only

when the children are made "to imbibe the eternal spiritual content of the race." 3

3. *The problem of science and mysticism.* In both his private and public utterances, Hitler marshaled the authority of science to combat the forces of ignorance (usually meaning organized religion).⁴ At the same time, his ideology proclaimed the mystical bond between "blood and soil" as the regenerative force of the race. Germans who removed themselves from the source of that power by emigrating abroad or to cities lost both their Germanic soul and their creativity. The powers of the blood were clearly shown in the following words of Alfred Rosenberg: "The actions of history and the future no longer signify class struggle or warfare between church dogmas, but rather a conflict between blood and blood, race and race, people and people. All of this means combat between spiritual principles . . . *race is the externalization of soul.*"⁵

The "blood and soil" theory embraced *Volksgemeinschaft*, which postulated the invincibility of a people wholly cognizant of its racial

inheritance. Hitler once explained to an audience that his own miracles derived not from himself but from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which enabled him to create. Taken to extremes, the mystical belief in the Fuehrer justified the belief in his infallibility as a German *Heiland* (messiah) who followed the dictates of Providence with "all of the assurance of a sleepwalker." 6

4. *The contention between empiricism and romantic naturalism.*

The restructuring of courses of study by the Nazis suggested their preference for the latter. "German" physics, "German" biology, and even "German" history assumed the superior cognitivity of German blood. The German mind was thought to apprehend in a manner different from that of other nationalities. National Socialist leaders never tired of haranguing the professors who clung to the barren traditions of rationalism. The Nazis could easily have altered Pascal's well-known remark about the heart to read: "The blood has its reasons which reason does not know." Rousseau's emphasis upon totality was also evident in the Nazis' proclivity for romantic naturalism, as Hans Schemm commented: "In the last decades Germany continually departed from ideas of totality. . . . An eternal law says: where men abandon wholeness . . . materialism, Marxism, Bolshevism, liberalism, intellectualism draw nearer. The better acquainted a people with wholeness, to concepts of folk and God, fatherland and homeland, honor and strength, the more such a people turns from materialism [and] rationalism . . . to spiritual, ethical, moral, character qualities."7

5. *The contention between evolution and intervention.* Had the Nazis placed their full confidence in the inevitable triumph of a biologically superior race, made preeminent by the slow,

evolutionary process, intervention through the *Fuehrerprinzip* would have been unnecessary. Instead, the textbook writers continually disparaged German leaders before 1933 and blamed them for their country's tardiness in developing into a world power.

The emphasis given to character building in the National Socialist educational philosophy was predicated upon the assumption that intervention was not only decisive in determining life's outcome but required careful preparation. It was not clear from the textbooks whether leaders emerged spontaneously as a result of the laws of group dynamics (evolution) or whether they emerged resolutely through the exercise of willpower (intervention).

Teachers in the *Volksschulen* were instructed to observe the group play of their pupils so they could identify the natural leaders who should be given elitist education, provided that their racial characteristics, intelligence, and character were also suitable.

Other tensions within the National Socialist philosophy had a similar origin: vitalism and mechanism; nature and personality; youth

and age; deeds and words. This research suggests that these tensions were never resolved in the literature of the history textbooks but that Nazi authors habitually favored the metaphysical, voluntaristic, romantic naturalist, and interventionist points of view. The bond that welded them together was the secular religious character of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.

Nazi history included the following religious, or metaphysical elements:

1. *Miracles*. The success of the movement was often viewed as an absolute miracle in which the original seven members grew to include the entire folk (much as the New Testament "fishes and loaves" multiplied miraculously to feed the multitude). During World War II, the textbook writers assured their readers that nothing was impossible for the German soldier.

2. *The regeneration of man*. The Nazis claimed the right of exclusive control over the education of youth (although their control was consolidated only after five or six years). They espoused educational goals that called for the molding of new men and new women to carry on the struggle. Their greatest appeal, according to George F. Kneller, was to "adventurers and visionaries, to youth and youthful aspirations, however temporary such an appeal must be." 8 And Alfred Rosenberg wrote:

This is the task of our century: to create a new human type from a new life-mythus. Courage is needed for this task. . . . For the dispirited will never master chaos, nor will cowards ever build a new world. . . . The new man of the approaching first German Reich will have but one answer for all doubts and questions: Alone, I will."9

3. *The transformation of German life.* The creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* paralleled in purpose the regeneration of the individual man. Yet education under the Nazis was always meant to be collective, never individual. The school was to prepare the individual to act in mass according to the dictates of the blood to secure the future of the race. The Nazi concept of community was an enlargement of the male band, which the Great War had established as a primary social group, often displacing even the family in importance. Nazi educators undertook to create a militarized society that accepted war as a normal condition of life. Compulsory military service was the climax of an ideal education. The army both distilled the martial qualities necessary for the militaristic way of life and eradicated the traits inimical to such a way of life. The success of the educational venture, in the schools and in the military, would assure the preservation of the folk in history. The "Thousand-Year Reich" assumed the success of this transformation.

4. *Apocalyptic elements.* Because purpose was paramount in the schools, Nazi education was teleological. As in ancient Israel, the German millennium was contingent upon the people's steadfast adherence to the faith, which must be preserved in absolute purity. The worship of false gods would bring immediate destruction. Moreover, the fate of the superior Aryan groups in the past was interpreted in the light of their faithfulness to the divinity contained in the blood. Scattered through history were Germanic lost tribes seduced by the false god of racial adulteration. Rosenberg wrote in his *Mythus*:

"No one who despises the religion of the blood is immune to its revenge; not the Indians, Persians, Greeks, or Romans. Nordic Europe also will be unable to escape this revenge if it does not do a *volte-face* and turn away from spiritually empty shibboleths and bloodless absolute ideas and begin to draw confidently once again on the buried well-springs of its own unique life-juices and values." 10

The emergence of the new Germany under the leadership of an appointed Fuehrer had biblical connotations. The complete physical obliteration of Germany's "Canaanites" from the Promised Land accorded completely with the mentality of the National Socialist deity.

5. *The existence of a Satanic force the antirace.* The Jew represented the antithesis of everything German, that is, "good." The textbooks carefully recorded the invasion of the German Eden by the first Jew (the serpent) during the late Roman period. The physical presence of the Jews within the German body politic was compared to the infiltration of plague-bearing germs capable of causing the decomposition of everything worthwhile.

6. *The extreme emphasis upon sacrifice.* The willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the folk was the ultimate practical goal of education. Implicit in such a view of education was the preoccupation with death and sacrificial suffering. *Heldentod* (heroic death) was portrayed as religious in nature.

7. *Struggle as the catalyst of everything good.* The social Darwinist belief in the positive benefits of struggle constituted one of the bedrocks of historical meaningfulness. Yet there was apparently no purpose behind struggle except more struggle, and anyone who contemplated a future equipoise misunderstood the nature of reality. Contention was a necessary process to ensure the vitality of all living things.

The purpose of this study was not to assess the impact of the Nazi educational materials. But within the scope of this research some comment is required to gauge the permanence of the Nazi

appeal. The experience in Germany after World War II suggests that the Nazi educational materials made no permanent imprint upon the minds of most Germans. 11

That the educational impact of Hitlerian ideas was transitory does not mean that they were insignificant. It is not possible to separate classroom instruction from education in the more inclusive sense. Measured by that broader gauge, the Nazis' educational program aimed at nothing less than changing the nation's view of the world and of reality itself. The short-term successes of the Nazi regime were certainly impressive, and George F. Kennan, the noted American diplomat and historian, cautioned the West not to forget the mighty head of steam generated by the Nazis before 1939.¹² It took the greater part of the world's armed might to bruise the head of that serpentine force, whose legions had been schooled for the contest in one of the most unique and far-reaching experiments in educational history.

Notes

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118. Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, p. 85.
119. Kneller, p. 225.
120. Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), pp. 5556.
121. Ibid., p. 49.
122. Ibid.
123. Kneller, pp. 11618.
124. Stein, p. 22.
125. Ibid., pp. 2223.
126. Schemm, pp. 45.
127. Gamm, p. 10.
128. Hitler quoted in Stein, pp. 2425. The belief in struggle survived even the disillusionment with the German people. As is shown in Albert Speer's works, Hitler expressed satisfaction that the Eastern foe rather than the Western would dominate Germany in the postwar era because Russia was the legitimate winner in the struggle for survival with the Aryans.
129. Ibid., p. 27.
130. *Geschichtsbuch-5*, p. 60.
131. Rauschning, p. 247.
132. Staudinger, p. 79.
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135. *Kinderfibel*, p. 99.

136. *Guck in die Welt*, p. 87.

137. *Deutsches Lesebuch*, p. 372.
138. *Ewige Strasse*, p. 93.
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140. *Geschichtsbuch-5*, p. 60.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid., pp. 56, 60.
143. *Deutsche Geschichte in Stichworten*, p. 11.
144. *Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes*, p. 238. In fact, Hitler expressed concern in his *Secret Conversations* (p. 165) that the Japanese would gain control of too much of the world now controlled by the white race.
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4. Gamm, pp. 181, 43.

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8. Kneller, pp. 18687.
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13. Waite, pp. 1830.
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44. *Ewige Strasse*, p. 48.
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54. Kneller, p. 195.
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56. Hammer, p. 70.
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Conclusion

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6. Waite, p. 459.

7. Schemm, p. 3.
8. Kneller, p. 7.
9. Pois, pp. 3334.
10. Ibid., p. 37.
11. Bleuel, pp. 280331.
12. George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1961), pp. 32224.

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